Defending Dissent

in a time of symbolic power

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how the ways in which modern austerity-driven, digital age societies are structured can fuel discontent, rising popular support for authoritarian regimes, and less tolerance of dissent in a wide range of country contexts. It applies recent theoretical work on social power in international relations and the work of Bourdieu and Wacquant on symbolic violence, poverty and social exclusion to the realm of elite geopolitics and (dis)information war. Several case studies are discussed from an ethnographic perspective. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with defenders of dissent and other human rights working in diverse national contexts to better illuminate the ways in which political 'leaders' create marginal categories of people to silence dissent and consolidate power.

for both sets of parents,
who nurtured the joy of discovery,

Rohit, Ryan,

and Kian

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time

- T.S. Eliot (1943)

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: .....  .....

DATE: ..... 25 SEPTEMBER 2018 ……..

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The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than their democratic state itself. That, in its essence, is fascism.

—President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1938

Naturally the common people don't want war… But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a Parliament or a Communist dictatorship… All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country.

—Hermann Goering, Nazi Third Reich second in command, 1946

If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.

—George Orwell, original preface to *Animal Farm*, 1953

The fact that after we had ended the Cold War we set about demonizing Islam, that we set about preparing ourselves for unlimited wars in the future, I continue to find that ***deeply*** *depressing. And I suppose that's what I was fighting against in* Absolute Friends*. And that is what – for as long as I can – I will continue to fight against. I would long for more comprehension. And a greater respect for the victims of our dreams.*

—David Cornwell (author John le Carré), 2004[1]

I think we are sleepwalking into (a) nightmare of comprehensive surveillance. George Orwell thought we would be destroyed by what we fear. Aldous Huxley thought we would be destroyed by the things that delight us. Well, guess what? We're doing really well on both fronts.

—John Naughton, technology expert, 2014[2]

It is precisely because citizens and civil society can be so powerful – their ability to harness technology and connect and mobilize at this moment so unprecedented – that more and more governments are doing everything in their power to silence them.

—U.S. President Barack Obama, 2014

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Origins

The ideas behind this study are particularly difficult to put to paper, largely because they hit so close to home. The study is a continuation of past research included in publications such as *Islam and Tolerance in Wider Europe* (Kilpadi 2007). In many ways it represents a sea change, however – an attempt to come to terms with personal trauma suffered as a direct result of the 'anti-terror' pre-emptive war policies associated with the Bush Doctrine and its aftermath (Ali and Kilpadi 2009, Kilpadi 2009), the economic underpinnings of that doctrine (Harvey 2005, Wacquant 2014, Peck 2010), and the associated backlash. In the spirit of Pierre Bourdieu's *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, while conducting this study I am striving by means of inter-subjective dialogue with activists and loved ones defending political prisoners and other dissenters – colleagues and friends caught up in similar struggles, who have suffered similar trauma – to discover new meaning and knowledge.

At first glance, many of my personal experiences appear to be unrelated, such as reporting on the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the violent 1993 uprising in Moscow, conducting international legal and human rights advocacy on behalf of refugees from former Soviet states, supervising research projects in Pakistan, or spearheading an advocacy and defence campaign for Iranian political prisoners held in connection with the 2009 post-election crackdown and show trial. In hindsight, I am beginning to see how they shape the pieces of a story from which lessons may be drawn about the function of state power and the defence of civil liberties in our post-9/11 age of hyper-digitisation and hyper-securitisation.

The initial idea for the thesis was to study the 'on the ground' experiences and lessons learned from human rights leaders defending victims of state-sanctioned abuses in Pakistan and Iran – those working among frontline defenders grappling with the fallout from the U.S.-led 'war on terror' and the spectre of the so-called 'clash of civilisations' (Huntington 1996). Having worked with local advocates during my years directing the

fellowship programme and defending political prisoners, I am simultaneously an outsider and insider. The more I spoke with potential interviewees and the more the news headlines over the years became dominated by stories about targeted U.S. drone killings, the Arab Spring uprisings against western-backed dictators, invasive U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) and Homeland Security surveillance practices, or government crackdowns on civil society groups and internet freedom around the world, however, the more I realised that my subject matter is in fact much broader in scope. The global campaign defending the victims of a brutal crackdown by Iran's Revolutionary Guards and other officials in 2009 in which I was forced to play a central role – and which helped set the stage for the Arab Spring – has been described as the beginning of a new human era of smart phone-armed citizen journalism (Thomas 2009, al-Marashi 2010). Partly in response to such citizen activism, state officials have unleashed a "global wave" of crackdowns and restrictions against civil society actors – a wave that "has a rapidity and breadth to its spread we've not seen before, that arguably represents a seismic shift and closing down of human rights space not seen in a generation," according to James Savage of Amnesty International in a 2015 interview with the *Guardian*. United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Opinion and Expression David Kaye concurred in a June 2016 public lecture, saying that we are seeing the most serious global threat to freedom of expression in 30 years, with alarming increases in the number of attacks against vulnerable minorities.[3]

In light of these global developments, this study also compares the ways in which political 'leaders' in a variety of socio-political contexts divide and conquer in strikingly similar ways, creating marginal categories of people to bolster their own power and divert attention from unspeakable state crimes. Case study research includes my native United States, Russia – the first country where I began conducting field research as a journalist in the 1990s, Iran – where my friend was taken hostage and I was asked by his family to publicly represent the case, and my adopted 'temporary residence' of Hungary – where I lived and worked for over 20 years. Study participants relate their 'defending dissent' experiences from countries including Hungary, Iran, Latvia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Slovakia, Slovenia, Russia, Turkey, the U.K., and the U.S. Regardless of where they live,

those defending dissidents and the victims of state crime are often not only attempting to save the lives of their clients, but to defend the rights of all people struggling to 'speak truth to power' – to voice dissent.

By 'dissent' I refer to "the holding or expression of opinions at variance with those commonly or officially held; refusal to accept the doctrines of an established or orthodox church; nonconformity" (OED 2016). Dissent is a human right – Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights protects freedom of expression. There are a number of developments in the human story that may be making the act of dissention, or 'speaking truth to power', more or less difficult in recent decades. One major development involves the collapse of the Soviet Union and the transformation of global power from a bipolar world dominated by two superpowers to a multipolar world, reducing competitive incentives to 'do the right thing' while further advancing the globalisation of neoliberal finance and *elite capture* (Mansuri 2004, Kilpadi 2010, Stiglitz 2015) via processes of 'accumulation through dispossession' (Harvey 2005) and 'violent entrepreneurship' (Volkov 2002). The elite capture of public goods has been characterised by a sharp rise in the profits of an extremely rich, more globalised elite and a growing divide between rich and poor (despite gains made in eradicating absolute poverty), accompanied by the rise of more authoritarian, oligarchical powers with much more to hide and to lose, less tolerant of dissent. Another major development has been the rise of *new media* (all digital media), characterised by professional investigative journalists' loss of their traditional monopoly on information and role as government-society mediators, along with the ability of anyone to launch a popular media campaign (Simon 2015, Keane 2016). The United States government's approach to the pursuit of 'war on terror' policies in response to 9/11 (much like 'war on drugs' and law enforcement policies) can be viewed as symptomatic of wider socio-economic developments and historical trends (Wacquant 2015). I delve further into their potential impact on dissent in future chapters.

The global explosion in flows of money, information, and people in recent decades appears to be overwhelming the Westfalian nation-state model of world order (Bollinger

2015). Each era has its own supposedly 'unprecedented' developments, and new global challenges such as climate change, nuclear and other deadly weapons proliferation, repeated incidents of terrorism or cybercrime appear to mark a paradigm shift that is changing the way nation states are governed. Governments, security agencies, armies, hospitals, universities, many institutions that have grown more and more fragmented into highly specialised disciplines over the past century must quickly become more interdisciplinary, international and case-study driven if they are to adequately address such global challenges. The erosion of state-structured and territorially bound media and communications has radically altered national public spheres along with concepts of community and the social contract (Keane 2009, Simon 2014). Individual nation states and their institutions today are like 'rocks in a global stream' (Bethlehem, e.g. 2014) – an increasingly powerful, unstoppable current that no single government or institution has real control over. National and international laws simply do not address many of the most pressing global questions, which will only be tackled head-on by developing international regulatory regimes and cooperative arrangements that do not yet exist.

At the same time, the 'myth of the weak state' remains largely a myth (Novak 2008), and the Weberian definition of a state as "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" holds true (Weber 1918). But in an 'age of transparency' (Obama 2008, Larkin 2016), nation-state 'leaders' are increasingly exploiting public desires to 'restore order' and relying on media campaigns that target vulnerable groups of people in their efforts to consolidate power and divert attention away from their own, increasingly more exposed vulnerabilities and misdeeds. Fresh academic research on the rise of populism (Aalberg, Esser, Reinemann, Stromback, De Vreese 2017) largely supports the contention by the editors of the forthcoming Routledge book *Populist Political Communication in Europe* (Moffitt 2016) that: "While it is widely acknowledged that the media and the role of communication more broadly are key to understanding the rise and success of populist leaders, parties and movements, there is very little research on populist political communication, at least in the English-speaking research literature."

Although the globalisation of finance, travel, and communications may be occurring at an unprecedented speed, such globalisation has occurred in the past. What appears to me to be truly unprecedented is the changing nature of *representation* in multiple fields of life in recent decades (Bourdieu and Eagleton 1991, Kilpadi 2010) – various forms of 'cutting out the middleman' – whether it be in a business startup or corporate boardroom, music studio or newsroom, university or think tank, Pentagon or Oval Office. Mediating authorities and traditional social hierarchies are becoming more fluid, moving between courts or Congress or the National Security Council and non-state actors influencing the 'court of public opinion' via blogs, Google or Facebook, for example. This study investigates perceptions about many 'essentially contested concepts' – democracy, dissent, freedom, human rights, terrorism, power – concepts with meanings that are particularly dependent upon shifting perspectives. Perhaps such meanings are even more contested, and more rapidly shifting, in our information-saturated digital age.

The notion that societies are judged by the treatment of their most vulnerable members is a truism. Generally speaking, "the more states open their policy processes to critical and minority opinions, the better their chances of ensuring the security and prosperity of their societies" – a conclusion evidenced by years of field research conducted in multiple countries and contexts for my edited book *Islam and Tolerance in Wider Europe* (Kilpadi 2007). Dissent has apparently slipped through the cracks in this paradigm shift into our post-Cold War, post-9/11 hyper-capitalist era. We need to find new ways to ensure that dissenters and the victims of cruel policies are not silenced, and their needs addressed.

Aims, objectives and contributions

This study investigates how the ways in which modern austerity-driven, digital age societies are structured can fuel discontent, rising popular support for authoritarian regimes and less tolerance of dissent. Recent theoretical work on social power in international relations is utilised, as well as the work of Bourdieu and Wacquant on symbolic violence, poverty and social exclusion to the realm of elite geopolitics and (dis)information war. The study includes semi-structured interviews with defenders of

dissent and other human rights working in diverse national contexts, as well as several case studies from an ethnographic field perspective. One hypothesis is that rising levels of support for authoritarian forms of governance and declining tolerance for dissent applies to western 'democracies' as well as autocracies and theocracies, for similar reasons.

Although the study is wide-ranging and interdisciplinary, it is framed within the context of relatively narrow areas of Bourdieusian social theory and international relations (IR) studies. Several relatively established academics (Adler-Nissen, Bueger, Little, Neumann, Pouliot, van Ham, Wacquant), along with several young students, primarily in the former Soviet Union (e.g. Arapov) have begun in recent years to describe and apply Bourdieusian social science concepts to IR studies and other disciplines in ways that I have been attempting to conceptualise and apply them to my own experience for many years.

This thesis offers four primary original contributions to existing scholarly literature. First, it seeks to contribute to the rapidly developing 'constructivist' international relations (IR) literature on social power in global politics (van Ham 2010), drawing in part upon thematic analyses of qualitative study data and ethnographical field 'case studies', including one as an American scholar defending political prisoners in Iran and thereby serving as an independent adviser and 'player' on the sidelines throughout the Obama years for the Administration's central foreign policy initiative – the U.S.-Iran Nuclear Deal and parallel prisoner swap negotiations. In addition to the contribution of unique field studies, the application of the Wacquant model to country cases is novel. Many contemporary scholars in the field of IR – particularly those inspired by Bourdieu's self-reflexive social theory – have heralded the promise held by the pragmatism espoused by the likes of John Dewey along with the recent 'practice turn' in constructivist IR studies to utilise detailed analyses of specific cases to better illuminate trends in rapidly evolving contemporary international relations policy and practice. Such research need not compete with, but rather complement realist and other more dominant, often U.S.-centric notions of the primacy of 'hard power' vis-a-vis 'soft power' (Nye, 2004).

Second, the thesis attempts to position these multi-country analyses within a broader global context of the evolution of post-Cold War austerity-driven capitalism and the rise of more oligarchical forms of governance (Harvey 2007; Doogan 2009; Klein 2009; Bridge 2014; Peck 2010; Stiglitz 2003, 2015; Rodrik 2012, 2017) by situating them within a specific Bourdieusian framework of neoliberal nationalism, as elaborated by Loïc Wacquant.

Third, the thesis attempts to apply several specific social theory concepts – primarily Bourdieusian notions of *symbolic power* and *symbolic violence*, along with the concept of *battle-concepts* (Jordheim and Neumann 2011) – to several case studies of 'defending dissent' for a better understanding of recent trends in contemporary international relations practices involving disinformation war in our increasingly networked digital age. To help contextualise complex events within a particular time, place and perspective and offer a more reflexive analysis, original ethnographic field cases focusing on Russia and Iran are presented.

Last but not least, semi-structured interviews are conducted with 15 former colleagues who work both internationally and in countries including Hungary, Iran, Latvia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Slovakia, Slovenia, Russia, Turkey, U.K., and the U.S., all of whom are struggling to defend dissenters and victims of gross human rights violations in various ways. The aim of this mini field study within my larger study is not an attempt to report facts of course, but rather to gauge perceptions among a small group of people with a relatively large amount of practical experience and policy influence in defending dissent. I was free to conduct the survey/interviews and include preliminary findings into this thesis only during the tail end of my research schedule, due to ethical sensitivities during the long-delayed time period when I was representing a hostage case. The timing of the data-collection – just prior to the US election – may serve as a useful baseline. I hope that this study will benefit the study's participants, university colleagues and others engaged in related research in a wide variety of scholarly and practical disciplines.

Although I base this study's findings on survey/interview data, much of the case study research draws upon over 20 years of my own personal experience. The 'positive impact' of the international policy fellowships programme that I established and directed for a decade on the lives of individual fellows and their communities has been the subject of study by scholars and organisations including the United Nations (Lopes and Theisohn 2003) and World Bank (Maxwell and Stone 2005). The case of Iranian-American Columbia University professor and former political prisoner/hostage Kian Tajbakhsh that I represented for many years – a case central to Iran's 2009 post-election crackdown and, eventually, U.S.-Iran Nuclear Deal negotiations – has been analysed in book chapters (al-Marashi 2010), scholarly journal articles (Tenzur 2012); pieces in popular publications such as *The New Yorker* (Secur 2009), *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Kurzman 2009) and *New York Review of Books* (Esfandiari 2009); countless primetime television programmes and headline news articles. Due to serious threats against dissident colleagues and friends, my voice was also muzzled by officially sanctioned systems of *symbolic violence* for many years. This thesis also represents an initial attempt at redressing that imbalance.

Structure

The following chapters describe the study's background context and problem selection, conceptual/theoretical framework and significance of the thesis, contribution to key debates in current literature, research methodology, and key considerations concerning research concepts and analyses. The study combines three basic elements: 1) theoretical framework, 2) personal experience and country cases related to the study, and 3) findings from interview/survey data in my attempt to create a framework that helps to illuminate how several unprecedented recent shifts are serving to increase the role of symbolic power in global politics and international relations and, potentially, constrain dissent.

Chapter 2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Research questions and hypotheses

The late social scientist and fellow New Yorker Charles Tilly published a series of "predictions" immediately following the terrorist attacks in September 2001, including the following (Tilly 2001, emphasis added)[4]:

> …forcing other countries to choose sides will…aggravate the very conditions American leaders will declare they are preventing…**[D]emocracy (defined as relatively broad and equal citizenship, binding consultation of citizens, and protection from arbitrary actions by governmental agents) will decline across the world.**
>
> Am I sure these dire predictions are correct? Of course not. I write them out both to place myself on record and to encourage counter-predictions from better informed colleagues.

Nearly two decades later, we have sufficient evidence to be able to say with confidence that the predictions of Tilly, who famously recommended that we analyse states as protection rackets to better understand them (Tilly 1990), have proven true. For example Larry Diamond, the founding coeditor of the journal *Democracy*, wrote in 2015:

> Leaders who think that they can get away with it are eroding democratic checks and balances, hollowing out institutions of accountability, overriding term limits and normative restraints, and accumulating power and wealth for themselves and their families, cronies, clients, and parties. In the process, they demonize, intimidate, and victimize (and occasionally even jail or murder) opponents who get in their way. Space for opposition parties, civil society, and the media is shrinking, and international support for them is drying up. Ethnic, religious, and other identity cleavages polarize many societies that lack well-designed democratic institutions to manage those cleavages. State structures are too often weak and porous – unable to secure order, protect rights, meet the most basic social needs, or rise above corrupt, clientelistic, and predatory impulses… The (mainly) postcommunist autocracies of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, centered on the axis of cynical cooperation between Russia and China, have become much more coordinated and assertive. Both countries have been aggressively flexing their muscles in dealing with their neighbors on territorial questions. And increasingly they are pushing back against democratic norms by also using instruments of soft power – international media (such as RT, Russia's slick 24/7 global television "news" channel), China's Confucius Institutes, lavish conferences, and exchange programs – to try to discredit Western democracies and democracy in general, while promoting their own models and norms. This is part of a broader trend of renewed authoritarian skill and energy in using state-run media (both traditional and digital) to air an eclectic mix of proregime narratives, demonized images of dissenters, and illiberal, nationalist, and anti-American diatribes.

In September 2016, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon warned in his farewell address to the U.N. General Assembly[5]:

In too many places, we see leaders rewriting constitutions, manipulating elections and taking other desperate steps to cling to power. My message to all is clear: serve your people. Do not subvert democracy; do not pilfer your country's resources; do not imprison and torture your critics… Muslims in particular are being targeted by stereotyping and suspicion that have echoes of the dark past.

How did we get here? My preliminary research question can be summarised as follows:

How has the space for the defence of dissent and other fundamental human rights been impacted by the 'war on terror' and the rise of 'new media'?

More generally: How can citizens be protected against state abuses in times of great insecurity? Can we detect patterns in the ways in which state 'leaders' create outcasts and scapegoats in their attempts to consolidate power in a digital age? What lessons have defenders of dissent and other human rights learned over the past decade about how best to protect against state-sponsored abuses? Can greater international solidarity be fostered to assist them?

These questions are framed within the wider context of economic austerity. Several **research hypotheses** to be investigated include:

- A majority of study participants perceive a reduction in their ability to protect the victims of state abuses – a shrinking 'space' for the rule of law and protection of dissent and other human rights over the past decade – at least in part due to the implementation of 'war on terror' policies and the exploitation of those policies by national authorities for political gain. Although this hypothesis may not sound surprising, the ways in which this trend has impacted the 'on the ground' defence of victims is revealing.

- A majority of study participants perceive an increase in their ability to protect victims online – an expanding 'space' for the protection of dissent and other human rights in the 'courts of public opinion' over the past decade – at least in part due to the rise of 'new media'. However, the more citizens are empowered by the use of new information technologies (for both good and evil), the more states are cracking down

on media freedom and access. Or, to repeat President Obama's quote above: "It is precisely because citizens and civil society can be so powerful – their ability to harness technology and connect and mobilize at this moment so unprecedented – that more and more governments are doing everything in their power to silence them."

- The perception of less security = more extrajudicial violence (via secret courts, online media, black ops etc) = less liberty = more state crime = less security

- Given this inverse relationship between the liberty or 'freedom' of the (rent-seeking) state versus the freedom of its constituents, state officials tend to implement policies that help to ***create marginal categories of people or 'enemies'*** to bolster the power of the state

Research concepts

Key concepts: *authoritarian diffusion, battle-concepts, disinformation war, dissent, elite capture, ethical capital, false consciousness, false representation, human rights, norm spirals, precariat, state crime, social power, symbolic power, symbolic violence*

First, a few key concepts underpinning the development of this study. ***Authoritarian*** *or* ***autocratic diffusion*** refers to the *non-coercive* influence of an authoritarian political entity's policies on those another of political entity (Ambrosio 2010, p378).

Battle-concepts (Kosseleck 1989; Palonen 2002; Jordheim and Neuman 2011) refer to specific concepts that are used to 'do battle' with other concepts in the struggle for dominance in a political hierarchy. *Battle-concepts* are often propagated by authorities to exert the kind of *symbolic violence* that may persuade citizens – practically unwittingly – to accept controversial public policies.

The idea of ***democracy*** is a widely contested concept. For the purposes of this study, it refers to a basic definition as expressed by Charles Tilly above – "relatively broad and

equal citizenship, binding consultation of citizens, and protection from arbitrary actions by governmental agents."

As mentioned in the introduction, ***dissent*** refers to "the holding or expression of opinions at variance with those commonly or officially held; refusal to accept the doctrines of an established or orthodox church; nonconformity" (OED 2016). Dissent is a human right (freedom of expression is protected by Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights). In contexts of economic austerity, those defending the rights of *precariats* often find themselves to be ***dissenters*** – at odds with majority doctrines.

The term ***disinformation war*** (not to be confused with misinformation, propaganda, or information war), likely derives from the Russian term '*dezinformacija*' and refers to "the dissemination of deliberately false information, especially when supplied by a government or its agent to a foreign power or to the media, with the intention of influencing the policies or opinions of those who receive it; false information so supplied" (OED 2016). European Union officials tend to use the term to refer specifically to Russian or Russian-style disinformation campaigns. In November 2015, a new European External Action Service communication unit launched a weekly 'Disinformation Review' that aims to expose and thwart Russian disinformation attacks.

My use of the term ***elite capture*** refers to the takeover of public goods by elites (Mansuri 2004; Kilpadi 2010; Stiglitz 2015) via neoliberal processes of 'accumulation through dispossession' (Harvey 2005). Such capture is characterised by a sharp rise in the profits of an extremely rich, more globalised elite and a growing divide between rich and poor (despite gains made in eradicating absolute poverty) accompanied by the rise of more authoritarian, oligarchical powers less tolerant of dissent.

Ethical capital emerged in the course of conducting this study to be a relatively under-appreciated form of social capital, particularly in the field of international relations in the era of new media. As Bourdieu (1989) explained, when they are perceived and recognised as legitimate, "economic capital (in its different forms), cultural capital, social

capital, and symbolic capital" can function "like aces in a game of cards, in the competition for the appropriation of scarce goods... Thus agents are distributed in the overall social space, in the first dimension, according to the overall volume of capital they possess and, in the second dimension, according to the structure of their capital, that is, the relative weight of the different species of capital, economic and cultural, in the total volume of their assets." Thus, the *ethical capital* ace is added to our deck of cards.

The concept of ***false consciousness***, attributed to Friedrich Engels, has been used – particularly in Marxist theory – to describe the state of someone who has fallen victim to manipulative ideology, or "a belief or outlook that (supposedly) prevents a person from being able to discern the true nature of his or her (social or economic) situation" (OED 2004). The idea informed subsequent descriptions of symbolic repression, including Bourdieu's conception of *symbolic power*.

False representation refers to the intentional misrepresentation of identity or other information, often for the purpose of committing fraud. In this thesis, however, I contrast the term with *false consciousness* to refer to deception and misrepresentation of information in order to win elections and represent voters who have been intentionally misled to obtain political support.

The concept of ***human rights*** bears consideration here. According to one of the founders of the study of human rights (and a professor of mine) the late Louis Henkin (1989), "the idea of *human rights* is related but not equivalent to justice, the good, democracy. Strictly, the conception is that every individual has legitimate claims upon his or her society for defined freedoms and benefits; an authoritative catalog of rights is set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The rights of the Universal Declaration are politically and legally universal, having been accepted by virtually all states, incorporated into their own laws, and translated into international legal obligations. Assuring respect for rights in fact, however, will require the continued development of stable political societies and of the commitment to constitutionalism."

The concept of ***norm spirals*** (Finnemore and Sikkink 1988, True-Frost 2010) refers to a process of social learning in which norms develop and encounter backlash, and are accepted and rejected in a Sisyphusian-type series of cycles or spirals, gradually moving social change in a more and more progressive (or regressive) direction over time.

The term ***precariat*** harkens back to Bourdieu's description (1998) of a "new mode of dominance" resulting from economic globalisation and fragmentation that forces workers "into submission", leaving them in a permanent state of insecurity or *precarity*. Guy Standing's 2014 book *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* places precariats within a social class distinct from that of other workers. For this study, however, *precariat* refers to all those marginalised by the social majority in ways that place them in a state of precarity.

In contrast to 'hard power', ***social power*** draws on Bourdieusian theory and refers to the power to scale up norms and values to the global level (van Ham 2010, p8), and establish those norms as legitimate and desirable "without resorting to coercion or payment" (p80).

I refer to ***state crime*** as currently defined by the International State Crime Initiative, with 'states' including "all bodies (and organisations) that seek to achieve a monopoly of the legitimate use of force in some substantial territory, whether or not they are internationally recognized as states", and 'state crimes' encompassing all "crimes committed or condoned by the personnel of such organisations in pursuit of organisational goals" (ISCI 2016).

Symbolic power (Bourdieu 1979), also called *soft power*, refers to modes of social and cultural domination arising from everyday social habits, particularly those embedded within institutions such as systems of education, which determine the social hierarchy. In Bourdieu's words, *symbolic power* is "the power to constitute the given by enunciating it, to make people see and believe, to confirm or transform the vision of the world, and thereby action upon the world, and thus the world itself" (Bourdieu 1991, p170). The

potential of symbolic power to exert rapid, global impact appears to have increased in a 'post-truth' era dominated by new media and the 'war on terror'.

While recognising the more literal association with symbolic acts of violence in a 'war on terror' age, I refer to ***symbolic violence*** primarily as conceptualised by Bourdieu: "Symbolic violence, to put it as tersely and simply as possible, is the violence which is exercised on a social agent with his or her complicity…symbolic violence accomplishes itself through an act of cognition and of misrecognition that lies beyond – or beneath – the controls of consciousness and will…" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Drawing on the classic Weberian definition of the state, Bourdieu elaborates that the state is defined by its "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical and symbolic violence over a definite territory" (Bourdieu 1998, p40). The state retains the right to not only pass and enforce laws, but to define and determine social classifications and hierarchies, whom to punish, and how. In his later work, Bourdieu points to social classification by gender as "the paradigmatic form of symbolic violence" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p170). The historical origin of such classification systems, Bourdieu argues, lies in kinship systems where marriage functioned as a means for forging alliances and family prestige, with women viewed more as objects of exchange between men rather than subjects (Bourdieu 2001, pp42-49; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, pp173-174). "Workers are under this kind of invisible pressure", Bourdieu (1991) notes, "and so they become much more adapted to their situation than we can believe. To change this is very difficult, especially today. With the mechanism of symbolic violence, domination tends to take the form of a more effective, and in this sense more brutal, means of oppression. Consider contemporary societies in which the violence has become soft, invisible." For the purposes of this study, I refer to symbolic violence primarily in the context of state symbolic power (per Bourdieu's definition of the state characterised by its monopoly on physical and symbolic violence). When the state carries out physically violent acts (as described in several field studies), the main aim is typically not the acts themselves but the symbolic violence imposed by those acts, directed toward a much wider circle of dissenters.

Chapter 3 THEORY AND LITERATURE

Bourdieu and international relations

The questions being addressed in this study obviously span multiple academic disciplines, making the development of an overarching theoretical framework and literature review particularly challenging. The study's theoretical underpinnings are fortified by a Bourdieusian foundation.

After reading works by many great theorists who help illuminate the social dynamics underpinning my personal experiences, ideas and questions raised in this study – Adorno, Arendt, Marx, Derrida, Dewey, Durkheim, Dworkin, Falk, Fanon, Foucault, Giddens, Gramsci, Habermas, Harvey, Luban, Niebuhr, Nussbaum, Polanyi, Popper, Rawls, Rorty, Waltzer, Weber and many others – Bourdieu's concepts or 'tools' appear to be most useful in my attempts to explain and theorise both my experiences and my approach to research. I sympathise with his focus on field research and practice informing his theories, along with his attempt to place human relationships at the centre of social analyses and recognise his descriptions of social agents 'playing the game' within their specific 'fields' and wider 'habitus' or socially constructed "schemata of perception, appreciation and action" that guide them in their social worlds (Bourdieu 1997, p200). In my dealings with the most senior government officials, I personally experienced how the *symbolic power* of cultural, linguistic, social, or political capital can be much more influential than the power of financial capital. Although the flexibility and 'fuzziness' of concepts such as 'social capital' can be viewed as a theoretical weakness, and have been misappropriated and likely overused by multiple scholars since Bourdieu (Fine 2010), their adaptability within a social theoretical framework in a variety of settings is also a strength. Such a framework also seems to blend well with constructivist theories of international relations focused on the creation of national myths and ideas (Anderson 1983, Sikkink 1998, van Ham 2010, Adler-Nissan 2011), as opposed to realist, neorealist, liberal or neoliberal theories of international relations. Larbi Sadiki writes in her article "Towards a 'democratic knowledge' turn? Knowledge Production in the Age of the Arab Spring" (2015, p709):

> [T]he constructivist 'learning cycle' is 'a continuous spiral'. It involves learning through socialisation, reflection and testing presented by a given context's experiences (Smith 2001a). No better lens matches the potency of actively learning democracy, bottom-up, through discovery in context-specific experiences via socialisation, reflection and so on. This is the antithesis of people being at the receiving end of democracy, when passively packaged through all kinds of ready-made moulds – 'one size fits all', as it were. The idea of constructivist democratic production and learning is therefore inextricably linked to 'decolonising' (and democratising) the entire field of 'transitology'... This is different from the sterile fashion in which democracy is percolated top-down by intellectual and political elites…

Further reading, discussion and deliberation about these questions over the years led me to apply social concepts developed by Bourdieu and his protégé Loïc Wacquant to the global contexts addressed by my study – together in a complex theoretical matrix as they are intended to be conceived, but particularly Bourdieu's concepts of bureaucratic *field*, *symbolic power*, and *symbolic violence*. Craig Calhoun advises (as did Bourdieu himself): "Bourdieu's key concepts, like habitus, symbolic violence, cultural capital, and field are useful in themselves, but derive their greatest theoretical significance from their interrelationships. These are best seen not mechanistically, in the abstract, but at work in sociological analysis" (2010, p47).

In recent years, scholars have begun to extol the virtues of applying Bourdieu's theories to studies of not only international education but also international politics, law, and diplomacy (e.g. Van der Stoep 2004, Guzzini 2006, Swartz 2008, van Ham 2010, Adler-Nissan 2011, Eagleton-Pierce 2011, Leander 2011, Adler-Nissan 2012, Eagleton-Pierce 2012, Adler-Nissan and Pouliot 2014, Pellandini-Simányi 2014, Arapov 2015, Qadir 2015, Wacquant 2015, Adler-Nissan forthcoming). Many of the books published for the Routledge 'New International Relations' series edited by Richard Little, Iver B. Neumann and Jutta Weldes, including *Social Power in International Politics* (van Ham 2010), employ Bourdieusian concepts. Notably, Rebecca Adler-Nissan of the University of Copenhagen has contributed the book *Bourdieu in International Relations: Rethinking Key Concepts in IR* in 2012. By drawing on Bourdieu's key concepts, she wrote in a 2013 article, "it is possible to map political units as spaces of practical knowledge on which diverse and often 'unconventional' agencies position themselves and therefore shape international politics" (p2). In doing so, however, she recommends that more scholars of IR and diplomacy draw from practical experience and place greater importance on the

role of interpersonal relations, as Bourdieu did. She argues that, in general, IR theory has had a fundamental problem – that "IR scholars have ignored that diplomacy helps constitute world politics…diplomats are estranged from IR theory, and vice versa, because IR scholars generally subscribe to *substantialism* [focusing on state, institutions, individuals etc], whereas diplomats tend to think [like Bourdieu] in terms of *relations*… [W]orld politics is deeply relational" (Adler-Nissan 2015).

This 'estrangement' was apparent when I conducted an English-language literature review of specific field studies, utilising scholarly databases such as Web of Science, JSTOR and Google Scholar via Bristol University's MetaLib database and cross-referencing various permutations and combinations of the topical search terms of "Bourdieu" together with this study's key concepts. The review uncovered relatively few original studies providing qualitative data or case studies utilising the particular Bourdieusian social theoretical models applied in this study. Notable exceptions include a number of books and studies on European Union diplomacy by Adler-Nissen published over the past decade, Russia-NATO diplomacy (Pouliot 2010), symbolic power and the International Trade Organisation (Eagleton-Pierce 2012), nuclear disarmament (Elhardt and Senn 2014), the international intervention in Libya (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014), and Russian 'social media diplomacy' (Arapov 2015). It is interesting that many of the studies focus on relations with former Soviet states, as does mine. Perhaps *symbolic violence* and other Bourdieusian concepts are particularly suited to Cold War and neo-Cold War investigations? The study focusing on the Libya case was the closest I could find to an investigation of elite U.S. 'war on terror'-related geopolitics utilising a Bourdieusian framework. I was not able to find any studies that apply Wacquant's recent framework to specific cases, however.

Wacquant has been developing this overarching theoretical framework in recent years, employing Bourdieu's concepts to the bulk of his ongoing decades-long research, offering other researchers this challenge: "[S]cholars of urban marginality, scholars of ethnicity and scholars of penality, unite. You have nothing to lose but your intellectual chains! And you have a world of scientific discoveries to gain as well as a wealth of

practical recommendations to interject into the public debate" (Wacquant 2013, p16). I take up Wacquant's challenge for the purpose of this study, while scaling up his theoretical framework to the international level.

In the abstract describing his 2013 paper "Marginality, Ethnicity, and Penality in the Neoliberal City: An Analytical Cartography", Wacquant emphasises: "[P]unishment is not just a key index of social solidarity, as Durkheim proposed, but also a core capacity and key site for staging the sovereignty of the state as classifying and stratifying agency. And it reveals the deep kinship between race and judicial sanction as kindred forms of official dishonour that converge in the constitution of public outcasts" (pp10-12). He presents this model to "disentangle the triangular connections between class restructuring, ethnoracial division and state-crafting" and scale up micro level, everyday "individual aspirations and interpersonal relationships" to the meso level of "social strategies and urban constellations" to the macro level of "state forms"[6]:

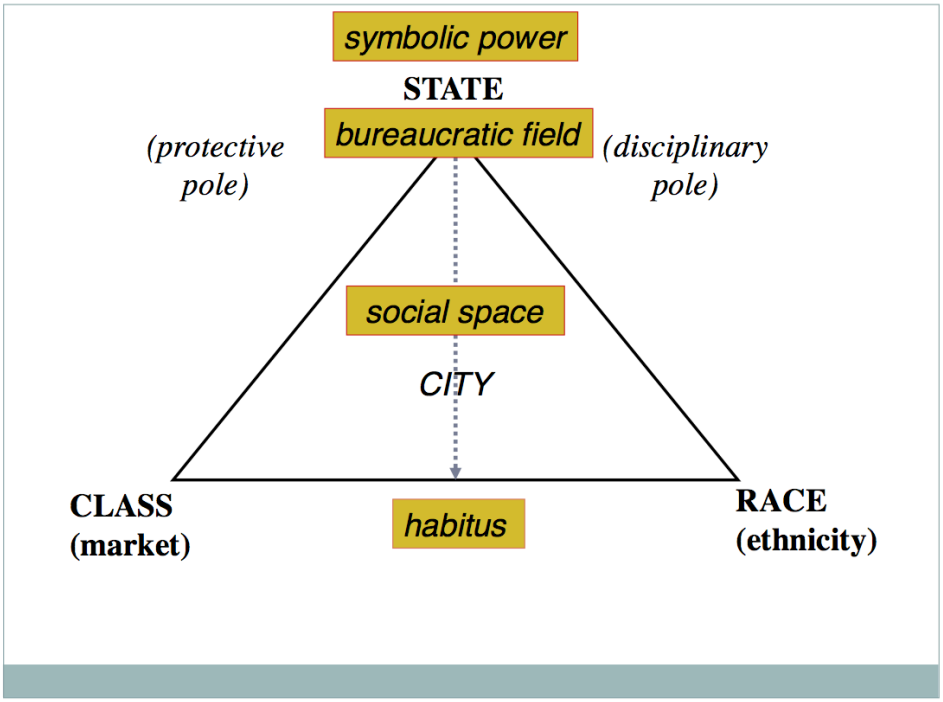


FIGURE 2 : THE UNDERLYING THEORETICAL ARCHITECTURE

For the purposes of this study, I apply Wacquant's theoretical pyramid above to both national and international contexts, where the high-profile fabrication and persecution of outcasts, foreigners, alien 'others' (*precariats*) serves to boost the *symbolic power* of insecure authorities seeking to consolidate power and/or divert attention from state crime. This conceptual framework is useful when analysing and comparing official statements about public show trials and/or secret trials involving often illegally detained political prisoners, hostages, whistle-blowers, immigrants, scapegoats – cases and campaigns pushed by officials to consolidate symbolic power while diverting attention from state crimes. The diagram helps demonstrate how state agents employ similar tactics to fabricate and generate precarity, marginality, inequality, and conflict in their efforts to consolidate organisational power, whether it be in the U.S., U.K., Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Hungary – within the context of diverse societies and political systems.

Bourdieu, neoliberalism and representation

Rooted in the same post-World War II ideological battles against communism, Marxism and socialism that guided the brief rise of militant McCarthyism in the United States, the 'neoliberal' agenda of austerity-driven, trickle-down economics has served the capital accumulation interests of the powerful, redistributing wealth and income. In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2007), David Harvey describes in clear terms the modern story of how once marginal economic theories have come to dominate and reconfigure state and society relationships throughout much of the world in the second half of the 20th century. Through a process of "privatization and commodification" involving the deregulation and expansion of financial markets and extraction of rents via means such as the sale of public assets, creation of new patents, or confiscation of land from peasants ("wealth through dispossession"), the world's economic elite have become richer; the gap between rich and poor wider (Harvey 2005, Peck 2010). So much so that today, some 62 people reportedly own as much wealth as the poorer half of the entire global population (Oxfam 2016).

In his July 2016 blog, media and democracy scholar John Keane warned about the dangers posed by excessive concentrations of wealth to democracy, explaining that

concentrated wealth "likes secrecy, surveillance and law and order. It outvotes ballots; and wealth tilts public policy in favour of the rich, towards shortsighted rewards or special treatment (deregulation, tax breaks) and away from the public goods (education, infrastructure) so essential to future economic growth. Finally, in normative terms, capitalist inequality plainly contradicts the democratic spirit of equality." When democratic societies fail to question the legitimacy of wealthy rulers, they can quickly descend into tyranny.

Harvey traces the post-World War II rise of the "hegemonic discourse" of neoliberalism, led by thinkers such as the Austrian political philosopher Frederich von Hayek and American economist Milton Friedman – thinkers who were deeply opposed to the Great Depression-era 'interventionist' theories of John Maynard Keynes and sought to displace the work of classical economists including Karl Marx, Adam Smith, and David Ricardo with that of neoclassical economists such as Alfred Marshall, William Stanley Jevons, and Leon Walras. Conservative think tanks, led initially by the Heritage Foundation in the United States and the Institute of Economic Affairs in Britain, helped usher neoliberalism to the forefront of mainstream thinking in these countries by the 1970s. The 'Washington Consensus' between the "missionary institutions" of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and U.S. Treasury encouraged the adoption of the 'right' policies in developing countries suffering economic crisis with a focus on *privatisation*; *liberalisation* involving the removal of government interference in financial markets, capital markets and barriers to trade; and *foreign investment*, which privatisation and liberalisation were intended to stimulate (Stiglitz 2003).

As with colonialism, neoliberalism has had a profound global impact. Within the brief span of 50 years, Harvey writes, the "founding figures of neoliberal thought took political ideals of human dignity and individual freedom as fundamental, as the 'central values of civilization'… These values, they held, were threatened not only by fascism, dictatorships, and communism, but by all forms of state intervention that substituted collective judgments for those of individuals free to choose" (2007, p6-7). The U.S. invasion of Iraq, for example, was launched by a state apparatus driven by policies

intended to facilitate conditions for profitable capital accumulation both in the U.S. and abroad – what Harvey calls the 'neoliberal state'.

Harvey's description and analysis of the neoliberal state is insightful and compelling. In contrast to Bourdieu's relatively sympathetic analyses, however, the work of Marx, Foucault, Harvey and others perhaps overstates conceptualisations of 'us versus them' – including apparent attempts to 'represent' or 'provide a voice' for members of a proletariat (or *precariat*) underclass. The 'banal' facelessness of bureaucratic systems of governance that serves to concentrate power while diffusing individual moral responsibility skilfully described by Weber and Arendt is a major problem, and Bourdieu employs insightful, nuanced worldviews when addressing it. Bourdieu told the distinguished Oxford Marxist scholar Terry Eagleton in a May 1991 discussion at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London:

> I think that Marxism, in fact, remains a sort of Cartesian philosophy, in which you have a conscious agent who is the scholar, the learned person, and the others who don't have access to consciousness. We have spoken too much about consciousness, about representation. The social world doesn't work in terms of consciousness; it works in terms of practices, mechanisms and so forth... We must move away from the Cartesian philosophy of the Marxist tradition towards a different philosophy in which agents are not aiming consciously towards things, or mistakenly guided by false representation. I think all that is wrong, and I don't believe in it... I feel that what I have to say is shocking for the self-confidence of intellectuals, especially the more generous, left-wing intellectuals. I am seen as pessimistic, as discouraging the people and so on. But I think it is better to know the truth... In most fields, we observe what we characterize as competition for accumulation of different forms of capital (religious capital, economic capital and so on), and things being what they are, undistorted communication referred to by Habermas is always an exception... When you look for the crumbs of Marxism, they...come from the arrogance of the intellectual with cultural capital. The behavior and the many struggles of left-wing parties are related to that: intellectuals hate and despise the workers, or they admire them too much – which is a manner of despising them...

This accusation of Bourdieu's from over 25 years ago seems particularly prescient now, during such a divisive and vitriolic period in U.S. history – a dismal state of affairs that numerous scholars of all political persuasions are blaming, at least in part, on the abandonment of workers by a Democratic Party and 'liberal elite' that has bought into the neoliberal economic regime (e.g. Frank 2004; 2016, Rondón 2017). Although Marxism has much to offer our neoliberal era, Bourdieu is striving for an anti-elitist approach to research that does not feign to 'represent' the workers, subalterns, poor huddled masses. An approach that attempts to understand and critique social systems while avoiding

revolutionary language that may incite violence, with the potential to ignite vicious cycles of violence when used by repressors and the repressed alike. Although Engels' notion of *false consciousness* informed Bourdieu's conception of *symbolic power*, Bourdieu stresses the embodied nature of symbolic repression. In contrast to the supposedly left-leaning so-called 'democracy promoters' and 'liberal interventionists' who use the language of democracy to define the 'civilised' and uncivilised (i.e. those worthy of overthrow), Bourdieu seems to yearn for Tilly's version of democracy rooted in "relatively broad and equal citizenship, binding consultation of citizens, and protection from arbitrary actions by governmental agents" (Tilly 2011), in which field research involves inter-subjective dialogue that places inherent value in the perspectives of 'others' rather than attempting scholarly representation. The reverse of the *symbolic violence* practiced by states in the 'war on terror' for example, with the dehumanisation of victims via false names and labels such as 'collateral damage' or 'enemy combatant' or refugee 'swarms' or even 'terrorist' (as an aside, it is interesting to note that in official court documents, my Iranian-American colleague and friend was referred to as an 'element' suspected of plotting government overthrow – ironic given his plight as a hostage caught up in a nuclear negotiation focussing on the acquisition of enriched uranium).

The quest to escape a neocolonial tendency to engage in various forms of *false representation* sums up a primary objective of the international policy research fellowship program that I developed – a small attempt to counter the neocolonial tendencies of USAID and other donor organisations to largely benefit western consultants and English-speaking power centers (holding substantial cultural, linguistic, financial capital vis-à-vis their foreign grantees) rather than decentralising funding to help fellows develop projects in their own languages, to write about and share their own experiences and, possibly, to serve as a catalyst in helping them solve their own community problems. By serving as relatively neutral mediators within their communities during the course of their fellowships – both insiders and outsiders – often during what could be described as a post-Cold War period of paradigm shifts, individual fellows were able to achieve social reform breakthroughs (Lopes and Theisohn 2003, Stone 2005, Kilpadi 2007). As with a musician or teacher, researchers conducting studies 'in the field' should strive for

interaction, learning and personal growth on the part of both the researcher and the researched. In his 1991 discussion with Eagleton, Bourdieu noted (emphasis mine):

> Althusser would refer disparagingly to the 'so-called social sciences'. It was a manner of making visible a sort of invisible separation between the true knowledge – the possessor of science – and false consciousness. That, I think, is very aristocratic – indeed one of the reasons why I don't like the word 'ideology' is because of the aristocratic thinking of Althusser... [There's a] scholastic bias – a bias to which we are all exposed: we think that problems can be solved only through consciousness. And that is where I differ from Foucault, and would draw a contrast with his important concept of discipline. Discipline, in French at least, points towards something external. Discipline is enforced by a military strength; you must obey. In a sense it is easy to revolt against discipline because you are conscious of it. In fact, I think that in terms of symbolic domination, resistance is more difficult, since it is something you absorb like air, something you don't feel pressured by; it is everywhere and nowhere, and to escape from that is very difficult. Workers are under this kind of invisible pressure, and so they become much more adapted to their situation than we can believe. *To change this is very difficult, especially today.* ***With the mechanism of symbolic violence, domination tends to take the form of a more effective, and in this sense more brutal, means of oppression. Consider contemporary societies in which the violence has become soft, invisible...***

I thought about this often while struggling to try and save my friend from torture and execution. I often wished to take his place, in order to be able to struggle against 'the enemy' *in reality*, rather than via a digital war of words, media symbols and 'psy ops'. Since he was not a member of the military, and not employed by an oligarch, and not rich, but 'only' worked as a relatively independent academic, and formerly with an organisation tied to a 'Jewish liberal', his economic and cultural capital was relatively low in the social hierarchy – an easy target for display in a show trial and public execution by authorities seeking foreign (preferably American) scapegoats. Authorities have learned all too well that victims who will not remain silent when personally threatened will remain silent when those same threats involve their loved ones. The harsh reality is that this same kind of silent, psychological torture – this extreme level of oppression – is currently being unleashed against millions of innocent victims, particularly in countries caught in the crossfire of 'great power' proxy wars.

As Wacquant contends, the entire framework of the contemporary global neoliberal hierarchy that has syphoned some one-half of the world's wealth into the pockets of 62 oligarchs now perched atop a 'trickle-down' pyramid scheme that is the global economy *requires* the "marginality", the *precarity* of millions, even billions – people subjected to a "culture of control" in an "age of diffusing social insecurity" (2010a, p4). He recommends that we rethink neoliberalism as a transnational, political "veritable

'revolution from above' that cannot be reduced to the naked empire of the market", which uses the 'war on terror', 'war on crime' etc. and the trope of individual responsibility as "bureaucratic theatre" while exploiting the regulation of the poor through disciplinary social policy (workfare) and the expansion of the penal system (prisonfare) to maintain those in power (pp4-12)[7].

"Bureaucratic theatre" aptly describes a potent tool of neoliberal authority, with its reliance on the construction of doxa and cults of personality. Despite the firm position of Bourdieu's work in sometimes over-determined 20th century French academia, it fits well within a 'progressive post-postmodern' (perhaps) framework in the ways that it strives to attribute value and meaning to those who do not necessarily rank high in the social hierarchy, in much the same way that many current anti-elitist, anti-hypercommercial movements seek to create alternative histories, art, music – to explore new, more community-oriented ways of viewing the world that are less reliant upon the vestiges of colonisation, repression, *symbolic violence*. Bourdieu recognises that the very act of conducting research is a political, performative act that cannot be value-free by definition. Human history is not a one-way 'development' path headed toward greater and greater achievement, but a messy, cyclical journey of triumph and tragedy. In addition to being an engaged scholar, Bourdieu was an active participant in public demonstrations and political debates urging positive social change. Indeed, in his view, research and activism go hand in hand.

As with Jane Addams' living social experiment at Hull House in 1940s Chicago, which helped illustrate John Dewey's focus on *participation* more than representation as the basis of democracy (Sigfried 1999), parallels could perhaps be drawn between Bourdieu's project and the anti-elitist post-war Fluxus avant-garde art movement, for example. With its 60s-era origins in courses taught by John Cage at the New School for Social Research and focus on the creation of spaces for public performance and participation, the movement continues to inspire alternative artists throughout the U.S. and Europe to organise all-inclusive, impromptu and interactive public 'happenings' that bring people of different backgrounds together around performative and transformative

experiences. Like many urban planners who aspire to bring alienated strangers together to form more tightly knit urban communities, the artists spearheading such happenings seek to transcend our everyday habitus, encounter difference, and view the world from other perspectives – to lead us into situations where we become 'strangers to ourselves' (Kristeva 1991, Tajbakhsh 2000). Particularly in a relatively lonely, austere digital world, the 'performance' of making books, art, music is perhaps not so much about self-expression or the finished products as the journeys spent creating and disseminating them, and the growth that evolves out of the communication, relationships and learning experiences with diverse people from various walks of life encountered along the way. The act of researching, like the act of performing, can make use of the power of language and image for positive social change in self-reflexive ways, as opposed to employing more dominant types of symbolic power associated with *false representation* and discrimination.

As social science researchers or defenders of dissent and other human rights we embrace alternative viewpoints and strive for authenticity and innovation, much like artists. Take for example the singer-songwriter Beck Hansen – simultaneously a protégé and critic of the anti-elitist Fluxus movement (his grandfather Al Hansen was among its originators) and Beat poetry, Bob Dylan-influenced folk musicians. Beck has famously sought to break down rigid barriers and identity politics separating musical genres, employing a Fluxus-like 'collage' style of music sampling early on in his career and unwittingly labeled a 'Generation X cultural icon' in the 1990s. Now in his mid-40s, with a repertoire that includes some 20 albums, over 1,000 songs, more than 1,200 concerts performed around the world and several Grammy awards including Album of the Year, Beck seems fairly representative of a generation of anti-neoliberal, post-postmodern artists. Decades ago, as an unknown 'anti-folk' singer making the rounds in tiny New York and Los Angeles coffeehouses, he was summoned to the luxurious Beverly Hills home of one of Bruce Springsteen's producers and advised to write songs 'for the people of the American homeland', with lyrics describing their stories. He felt profoundly "disturbed" and "shaken up" by that brand of corporate mentality concentrated on market demographics: "It struck me as wrong. You write about your life. You don't write to

cater to other people's lives" or pretend to represent them (Beck 1997). On several occasions he has emphasised that the very act of "making a judgment" without "firsthand experience" is intolerant and that for him, the best art and music is "more about creativity than the grand statement of an agenda" (e.g. Beck 1996).

The hollowness of 'grand statements of agendas' seems to be a key point in a world where all sides appear to have 'sold their souls to the devil' (to borrow a famous blues quote) in exchange for a hyper-capitalist form of neoliberalism that enriches elites at the expense of the weakest and most impoverished members of society, apparently devoid of adequate leadership in the places where we might most hope to find it. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Bob Dylan – who likened his songs to "mystery stories" told "on the fringes", "the kind that Shakespeare say when he was growing up" (Dylan 2015) – was awarded a Nobel Prize for Literature, the first songwriter to be honoured in 122 years of the Swedish Academy, which compared his poetic performances to those of Homer or Sappho. When our most popular thought experiments have run aground, we turn to our greatest artists to help us muddle through.

The need to break away from 'grand agendas', utopian ideologies, national myths, advertising campaigns and cults of personality exploiting hate rather than hope – whether in commercially driven politics or pop culture – seems characteristic of a growing segment of younger artists and entrepreneurs who have grown weary of hyper-capitalist lifestyles, supposedly left-leaning 'sell-outs' and postmodern aimlessness lacking in human connection and meaning. Amid the massive rural-to-urban migration that has taken place over the past century, and within the current context of highly mobile 'gig economy' labor forces, many are feeling shackled and isolated, overworked and cut off from deeply emotional human connections. They are craving something – anything – that gives them a sense of purpose and makes them feel part of something greater than themselves. Life is about developing close relationships and sharing memorable experiences with other living things but our formal education system, entertainment industry, capitalist economic system, entire system of 'scientific knowledge acquisition' often works against this way of living. Maya Angelou famously said, "I've learned that

people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." For those wanting to *feel* more, most politicians and academics, no matter how practical and effective, do not offer the kind of leadership they are seeking. In such a context, electoral campaigns become popularity contests first and foremost – performative theatre. Beck said in a 1999 interview:

> I think life is somewhat mundane. We don't live big dramatic lives. There's no linear story, but a collection of moments and mundane pleasures – reading a newspaper, looking at a tree. But the way life is represented to us (online) and in movies, we're given this impression that it's supposed to be bigger than it actually is. I think that frustrates people, and the emptiness comes out of this longing for big events. I know that feeling as a teenager, just waiting for this thing that's supposed to happen. And it's not a very good feeling. I don't think young people are taught action, especially these days. They think it's all just going to happen in front of them, and they don't realize they have to go out and make something happen, they have to *participate* to make what they want come to be.

Nevertheless, despite this epidemic of relative passivity accompanied by the attempts of corporate copyright lawyers to limit the sharing of artistic 'product', younger generations who have grown up with YouTube and social media understand perhaps better than their predecessors that although every voice is unique, there is no such thing as absolute originality or authenticity, that the act of sampling others' work, sharing and collaborating is the essence, and even the aim, of creativity. Copyright claims, identity politics dividing artistic genres, fears of cultural appropriation should not serve to stifle creativity or purpose. In a reference to iconic album cover art that could also easily describe his collage approach to music, Beck said in 2001 (emphasis mine):

> We may find it easier to objectify an image as it becomes a cultural signifier. We can associate new things with it as it achieves distinction from its source. ***Claiming new aesthetic territory from the terrain of the familiar seems to be one of the lessons learned from the postmodern postmortem.*** I opened up the possibility in my mind of creating a gallery of these familiar images and letting them form a collective force.

Bourdieu also understood well that as social science researchers and social actors, we necessarily take normative and performative stances based on a certain set of learned practices, linguistic signifiers and values, while at the same time paying tribute to and respecting the positive role that tradition, institutions, authority and culture can play in our respective societies. Indeed, coming together to celebrate shared experiences and values across income, ethnic etc. lines is one of the best ways to bridge the urban-rural

and other deep social divides that radical right ideologues and populists feed upon. An inspiring example involves a black blues musician who convinced hundreds of Klu Klux Klan members to abandon the group, simply by seeking them out, playing music and befriending them (Walker 2016). A Venezuelan writing to Americans about countering ugly populism advises (Rondón 2017):

> The problem is tribal. Your challenge is to prove that you belong in the same tribe as them: that you are American in exactly the same way they are. In Venezuela, we fell into the abstraction trap in a bad way. We wrote again and again about principles, about the separation of powers, about civil liberties, about the role of the military in politics, about corruption and economic policy. But it took our leaders ten years to figure out they needed to actually go to the slums and to the countryside. And not for a speech or a rally, but for a game of dominoes or to dance salsa—to show that they were Venezuelans too, that they had tumbao and could hit a baseball, could tell a joke that landed. That they could break the tribal divide, come down off the billboards and show that they were real. And no, this is not populism by other means. It is the only way of establishing your standing... You will not find that pause button in the cities or the university campuses. You will find it precisely where you're not expected... It's a tall order. But the alternative is worse. Believe me, I know: I'm from Venezuela.

In a world apparently starved of adequate intellectual and political leadership and representation, if a serious anti-neoliberal revolution seeking more collaborative, communal, democratic and meaningful ways of organising human societies were to emerge, artists, musicians, alternative 'green energy' and 'sharing economy' innovators and other relatively young creators are likely to play some of the most instrumental roles. If Bourdieu were alive, I imagine that he would be playing right along with them.

Key interdisciplinary debates in literature and practice

In my attempt to analyse (with help from Wacquant's conceptual pyramid) findings gleaned from interviews with defenders of dissent or 'dissenters' defending precariats in their societies, several central debates factor into the analyses. These are debates that I have encountered repeatedly in senior U.S. foreign policymaking and academic circles, namely debates surrounding the so-called 'clash of civilisations' as well as concepts of human rights 'cultural relativism', clashes pertaining to questions of liberty versus security and the rule of law versus lawfare, and disagreements among those espousing 'soft power' versus 'hard power', non-interventionist versus interventionist foreign policy solutions. The 'clash of civilisations' debate encompasses arguments about 'cultural' barriers to the practice of participatory democracy and defence of dissent and other

human rights in majority Muslim societies as put forward by scholars including Bernard Lewis (e.g. Buruma 2004), Samuel Huntington (1993) and to some extent, until recently, Larry Diamond (e.g. 2010). Framing such debates within the context of state bureaucracies geared towards generating marginalities as described by Bourdieu and Wacquant helps place them in a new light and reveals new ways of conceptualising them.

The 'clash of civilisations' and human rights 'cultural relativism'

In the mid 1990s – when I was finishing graduate school in international affairs and human rights law at Columbia University in New York, working for the Open Society Institute of the Soros Foundations and preparing to get married and move to Budapest to open a foundation office there – Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and scholar Robert Wright described a seminal theme running through U.S. academic and foreign policy circles in a 1996 review of Harvard geopolitical theorist Samuel Huntington's 1993 book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*:

> In American foreign-policy circles, everyone is waiting for the next X. "X" was the byline on the famous 1947 essay in *Foreign Affairs*, actually written by George Kennan, that analyzed Soviet communism and laid out the post-World War II policy of "containment." Where is a comparably compelling vision of the post-Cold War world, a new lodestar for American foreign policy? … Huntington's book is devoted to a currently ubiquitous theme: tribalism. In politics, the tribal theme shows up in the rhetoric of Pat Buchanan, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, Jean-Marie Le Pen, and so on... Now that the bipolar order of the Cold War is gone, we're told, the primal bonds of ethnicity, language, and religion will be a central – if not the central – organizing principle in world affairs. Huntington carries this idea to new heights of theoretical elaboration. Surely tribalism has never sounded so cerebral. But it's one thing to analyze a phenomenon and another thing to encourage it. Huntington crosses the line so easily as to make you wonder: How different, really, are the lowbrow and highbrow expressions of the vogue for tribalism? … Why is it an inherent property of intercivilizational relations that they be "usually cool" and "often hostile"? … that's just another way of saying that liberal democracy – a value Huntington surely ranks above the alternatives morally – may never fit some peoples as naturally as it fits us… The Barbarians, in short, are at the gate – and conspiring against us… (T)he growing academic fad of thinking in primarily, almost obsessively, tribal terms is (not only) analytically sloppy, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Fast forward over two decades later, and Wright's 'self-fulfilling prophecy' has by many accounts become reality, largely thanks to the U.S. invasion of Iraq and, more recently, the rise of the Islamic State, which many largely attribute to fallout resulting from that ill-advised invasion and its aftermath. Wright wrote in *The New Yorker* in 2015:

> In 1996, when I reviewed Samuel Huntington's book "The Clash of Civilizations"…I fretted that Huntington's world view could become "a self-fulfilling prophecy." This was before 9/11, and I wasn't

thinking about Islam in particular. Huntington's book was about "fault lines" dividing various "civilizations… Since 9/11, I've realized that, in the case of Islam, the forces that could make the clash of civilizations a self-fulfilling prophecy are particularly powerful… When people think of extremism as some kind of organic expression of Islam, the belligerence of radical Muslims starts to seem like an autonomous, intrinsically motivated force – something whose momentum doesn't derive from mundane socioeconomic and geopolitical factors. It's something that you can stop, if at all, only with physical counter-force. In other words: by killing lots of people… The Iraq War, more than any other single factor, *created* ISIS…in part, because we got all freaked out about Al Qaeda and overreacted to it. And now we're getting freaked out about ISIS… And the process feeds on itself.

Wright emphasised that such 'freak outs' are to be expected among radical right media and politicians, but "when élite and generally liberal publications start broadcasting dubious catch phrases that dovetail nicely with such explanations, I start to worry." This is precisely what has been happening, even among renowned academics following what can be characterised as neocolonial lines of thought following Lewis (1990) or Huntington, despite the fact that much 'on the ground' scholarly research has shown that 'intercivilisational' clashes tend to have as much if not more to do with competition for resources and lack of equitable political representation among various groups than with culture or religion (e.g. Kilpadi 2007, Diamond 2009, Pape 2010, Ross 2014).

When President Barack Obama assumed office in 2008, one of his preliminary acts was to remove the highly valued bronze bust of Sir Winston Churchill that formed a centrepiece to the backdrop of his predecessor George W. Bush's Oval Office desk, gifted by the British Government following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This may have seemed a minor item on a Herculean foreign policy agenda that included promises to gradually disentangle U.S. troops from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan while stepping up drone attacks against terrorist targets in Pakistan's tribal regions, close the notorious U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, attempt to engage countries long perceived as U.S. arch enemies such as Iran, and mediate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in hopes of achieving wider Middle East peace. Nevertheless, it was a move of symbolic significance, placing distance between the worldview of Obama – the first non-white president of the United States – and that of his predecessor.

For former President George W. Bush and his British counterpart Tony Blair, Churchill's legacy as a western war hero who led the global defeat of Adolf Hitler's fascism might

symbolize an ideal post-9/11 leadership. Following 9/11, presumably, Bush would follow in Churchill's footsteps by leading the global 'war' against Osama Bin Laden and 'Islamic fundamentalist' terrorism. British politician and Brexit promoter Nigel Farage used his first meeting with Donald Trump as U.S. President to push the return of Churchill's bust to the Oval Office (Henderson 2017). By contrast, while honouring Churchill's war hero legacy, President Obama was keenly aware of his 'other' reputation, particularly among those on the receiving end of British colonial power. As the British writer and newspaper editor Mehdi Hassan summarized in the *Guardian* in 2011:

> Here is a man, after all, who opposed votes for women and independence for India; who described Mahatma Gandhi as a "half-naked fakir" and Hindus as a "foul race"; laid the foundations for apartheid in South Africa; supported the compulsory sterilisation and segregation of the "feeble-minded" and the "insane"; accused Jews of being behind a "worldwide [Communist] conspiracy for the overthrow of civilisation"; and, anticipating the crimes of Saddam Hussein more than 60 years later, said he didn't understand the "squeamishness about the use of gas… I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes [in Iraq]."

Churchill also pushed U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower to orchestrate the 1953 coup that ousted a democratically elected leader in Iran – a coup that helped plant the seeds for Middle East terror (Kinzer 2003).

Throughout his presidency, Obama stressed that the promotion of Middle East and interfaith peace – along with the conceptual delinking of Islam and violence – is potentially the most lethal weapon against the likes of al Qaeda and ISIS. He sought to distance national security strategies from 'clash of civilizations' conceptions and to officially delink concepts of Islam and terrorism.[8] He repeatedly warned against a 'clash of civilisations self-fulfilling prophecy' in press conferences. Not unlike former Presidents Reagan and Bush, however, President Obama has also subscribed to a 'Cold War worldview' pitting good against evil in a kind of 'cosmic war' (Juergensmeyer 2010).[9] Obama has also been strongly influenced by the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr (see for example Niebuhr's 1944 book *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of its Traditional Defense*, briefly referenced at the funeral of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan). Following Obama's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech in Oslo in 2009, *New York Times* columnist David

Brooks wrote: "In the past few weeks, [Obama] has revived the Christian realism that undergirded cold war liberal thinking and tried to apply it to a different world. Obama's race probably played a role here. As a young thoughtful black man, he would have become familiar with prophetic Christianity and the human tendency toward corruption; familiar with the tragic sensibility of Lincoln's second inaugural; familiar with the guarded pessimism of Niebuhr, who had such a profound influence on the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr".[10] Although Niebuhr's version of Christianity was relatively liberal (Hobson 2011), even King eventually turned away from his notions of absolute good and evil and the anti-pacifist attitudes expressed in his later work in favour of Mahatma Gandhi's belief in human shades of ignorance and active methods of nonviolent resistance (Carson 1998). Not so with Obama, evidently, who in his Nobel speech pointed to Niebuhr's brand of evil as a primary reason for increasing U.S. troop levels and escalating the war in Afghanistan, which he later considered to be a mistake (Obama 2009).

The late American pragmatist philosopher and literature professor Richard Rorty explains at least part of the historical evolution of such dualist thinking thus (2007):

> Viewing political disagreement as a symptom of moral failure presupposes a moral psychology that goes back to the notion of sin as a free choice of evil, a deliberate turning away from the divine light. Kant inherited the notion of radical evil from this theological tradition. He combined it with the idea that being moral was a matter of obedience to principles whose truth was relevant to all rational beings… Irrationality, thought of as a blameable failure to exercise an innate faculty, has thus become the secular equivalent of sin…a deliberate turning away from the light... John Dewey regarded the Kantian way of thinking of morality as incorporating all that was worst in Platonism and Christianity… Like Hegel, Dewey viewed moral principles not as self-evident truths but as rough summaries of past practices… Plato was wrong. The best we can do, when making moral or political choices, or when deciding between scientific theories or religious convictions, is to work out as coherent a story as we can.

But (speaking of cultural relativism), how can we adequately critique the human tendency to view the world in absolute, black-and-white, antagonistic terms without some consensus as to where we, as humans, loosely agree we should be heading? How do we define the 'good society'? Even Bourdieu and Derrida were self-reflective and critical about their own inability to escape the very dichotomous thinking they sought to deconstruct. This is where – despite the recognition that law often serves as a tool of state power – an examination of international human rights law is useful, as it explores and

attempts, however controversially, to legitimise within national and global legal regimes the most basic and 'universal' values that national representatives can agree upon in various international fora.

Analyses comparing constitutional and institutional frameworks associated with different nations at different times can help form a practical glue loosely holding together relatively abstract critical theories about the ordering of social relations by demonstrating how the application of such theories may look in practice. As then Columbia University professor, Center for the Study of Democracy, Toleration and Religion co-founder and U.S. Social Science Research Council "Reinventing Secularism" research project chair Alfred Stepan wrote in his article "The World's Religious Systems and Democracy: Crafting the "Twin Tolerations" (2001): "in the first generation of democratization theory the two most neglected areas were nationalism and religion. From the mid-1990s, this vacant space has been dominated largely by a discourse generated by Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* and by policy activists concerned with terrorism and intrigued by the possibility of the United States and some of the other large powers installing democracy from above. Democratic theorists, comparativists and policy activists must attempt to re-examine the terms of this debate and to provide new conceptual and policy alternatives where appropriate" (see also Esposito 1997, Kilpadi 2007, Hashemi 2009). Stepan urges scholars to shift away from Huntington's "civilizational" analysis of a clash between 'the West' and 'Islam' and Rawls' recommendation in his book *Political Liberalism* (1993) to "take the truths of religion off the political agenda" (p151) and move towards what he deems to be a more helpful, progressive "institutional perspective" (p213). He describes the "minimal institutional statement of what democratic politics entails" this way: "…as long as groups do not use violence, do not violate the rights of other citizens, and advance their interests within the rules of the democratic game, *all* groups [including religious groups] are granted the right to advance their interests, both in civil society, and in political society" (p216). He calls this crucial, minimal requirement of democratic politics "multivocality": "As a research strategy we should beware of assuming that any religion's doctrine is univocally prodemocratic or antidemocratic. Indeed, I would suggest that a better research strategy is to be on the alert for *multivocality*" (pp223-26).[11]

One of my hypotheses for this research – based largely on personal experience – is that the *symbolic power* of apparently ethical behaviour is especially influential within the multivocal context of digital media, so that positively impacting the 'court of public opinion' online can be crucial in determining the fate of those facing state persecution. Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic power may apply even more forcefully in online social contexts, where reputation, 'clout scores', numbers of 'likes' mean virtually everything in communities of relative strangers, and often translate into 'real life' payoffs (Bartlett 2015). It may be 'symbolic', but the recent rise in the number of suicides, murders, incidents of physical violence stemming from social media bullying demonstrates the power of *symbolic violence* online. The same applies to state and other actors seeking to muzzle dissent and create scapegoats of course – recent security agency programs in a number of countries (Russia being perhaps the most conspicuous) that pay bloggers to spread propaganda online demonstrate the lengths states are willing to go in supporting information 'cyber-warfare' (Sindelair 2014). Although charismatic 'leaders' will garner more symbolic power with the help of technological tools than the average citizen (Morozov 2012), for the first time ever the media 'playing field' has been opened to virtually anyone, allowing those who learn best how to 'play the game' to accumulate unprecedented amounts of symbolic power, while states adopt increasingly harsh measures in the silencing of critics, as President Obama noted.

I agree with Pellandini-Simányi that Bourdieu may go too far in discounting conscious efforts to 'do the right (or wrong) thing' and the influence of ethics in the competitive pursuit of power (2014, pp668-670, emphasis mine):

> To acquire symbolic power…one needs more than instrumental capitals: qualities that yield esteem. I will call these qualities 'ethical capital'… The point that I proposed here is not that people act ethically and out of pure devotion at all times; simply that sometimes they do, yet in Bourdieu's framework these occasions are indistinguishable from those when they – consciously or unconsciously – pursue power… [T]he existence of hierarchy and its acceptance as based on legitimate, symbolic power does not necessarily indicate an underlying power-motive; ethics also create inadvertently a sense of legitimate hierarchy and hence symbolic power. If [this] tautology is resolved, a modified version of Bourdieu's theory can be fruitfully incorporated into the sociological study of ethics. I have already mentioned the usefulness of the habitus in understanding the way ethics are acquired and operate in practice. Beyond that, ***Bourdieu's concept of the field helps understanding that ethics are not a matter of individual, acultural preferences, but exist in historically evolving, culturally specific areas where their value is recognized and institutionalized. Fields understood this way are the primary arenas where ethics and the cultural***

traditions are 'located', as opposed to abstract notions of 'values' that float somewhere outside society.

Particularly within the 'bureaucratic fields' of ethics, international law, international relations and diplomacy relying heavily on 'bureaucratic theatre', displays of apparently ethical behaviour can lend moral authority, status, legitimacy within the bureaucratic hierarchy – a major source of symbolic power. Anyone who has seen experiments carried out on fairness and altruism with primates and children by Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology or by Frans de Waal of the Yerks National Primate Research Center in the U.S. have witnessed how, in general, human beings and some other primates seem to possess a surprisingly strong, innate sense of fairness, and that the sense of 'doing good' can serve as a powerful social reward and advantageous source of social capital in groups.

The use of *symbolic violence* in mass media has reached unprecedented levels, with information reaching new heights of 'weaponisation' in a digital age of viral global propaganda campaigns and cyber-warfare by both state and nonstate actors. Governments are hiring thousands of cyber experts to not only launch propaganda campaigns but troll the internet and inflict physical damage – spy on citizens, steal foreign secrets, rig election results or sabotage nuclear facilities remotely using nothing but computers as weapons. Cyber campaigns exploiting the symbolic power implicit in *battle-concepts* deployed by officials in the court of online public opinion are increasingly becoming a central tool of international relations (Parker 2017). For example, speaking to U.S. National Public Radio about his 2016 book *Dark Territory: The Secret History of Cyber War*, Fred Kaplan described the "massive cyberattack" in 2014 by the Iranian government on entrepreneur Sheldon Adelson's multi-billion-dollar casino empire. After Adelson stated that if he were in charge of the nuclear talks with Iran he would drop a nuclear bomb in the Iranian desert as a warning, Iranian officials wiped out his casino network's hard drives and flashed on its computer screens: "This is what happens when you talk about using weapons of mass destruction" (Kaplan 2016):

So you could see this attack as the first instance when cyberweapons were used not for espionage, not to steal trade secrets, not for hacking into military networks and achieving some kind of advantage in future

war, but to send a political message, to object to someone's politics. This was more famously followed just a few months later by North Korea's hack into Sony Pictures for putting out a movie that insulted their leader, Kim Jong-un. So this shows that **we're entering a new phase of cyberwar, when anybody can be a target and for any number of purposes. It has become a tool of international relations broadly speaking.**

Liberty versus security and the rule of law versus 'lawfare'

The Bush Doctrine, first articulated after the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and largely intact, has also eroded the international order predicated on rule of law. Codified by the U.S. National Security Council in 2002, the 'doctrine' refers to a unilateralist foreign policy of 'preventive war' through military action, including pre-emptive strikes and regime change, even in the absence of a 'clear and present danger' to national security. The tragic irony of the Bush Doctrine in practice – perpetual peace through perpetual war – has not been lost on its critics. Bush's attack on the rule of law escalated to target "judicial activism" or "lawfare", described in the March 2005 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America:

Our strength as a nation state will continue to be challenged by those who employ a strategy of the weak using international fora, judicial processes, and terrorism.

In the Orwellian logic of the Bush Doctrine, the rule of law is the "strategy of the weak". Lawyers defending the weak are equated with terrorists. Might this include, one wonders, the likes of Lincoln, Gandhi, King and Obama?

In practice, the Bush Doctrine has not increased global security, but anarchy. The foreign policies of the Bush era, which turned the U.S. Constitution into putty in the hands of an all-powerful president (and vice president), have strangely but predictably morphed to serve the world's most brutal regimes. As Abu Ghraib painfully demonstrated, adherence to human rights standards even in times of war is not only good humanitarian policy, but also good military strategy. In a world of nuclear proliferation and environmental degradation, a radical new approach to the protection of "national security" is needed that emphasizes human security – based not solely on military threats and strikes, but that also builds local trust, alliances, schools and workplaces, and is bolstered by treaties, international fora and judicial processes such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the

Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, the Convention Against Torture, the International Criminal Court and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Meanwhile, as the 'war on terror' continues to rage on indefinitely, the U.S. Government under President Obama's watch cannot claim moral authority on human rights issues but instead inherited and perpetuated a record of massive human rights violations associated with military occupation on a number of fronts. In their 1996 (post-Oklahoma City bombing) article "Preventing a Reign of Terror: Civil Liberties Implications of Terrorism Legislation", legal scholars David B. Kopel and Joseph Olson employ arguments supported by U.S. constitutional Bill of Rights to warn against proposals for greater military involvement in domestic law enforcement and the expansion of new federal 'national security' powers as detrimental to the defence of civil liberties and, therefore, actual 'national security'. They presciently foresaw the dangers of 'Bush Doctrine'-type policies, which led to the creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the implementation of the U.S. Patriot Act limiting civil liberties, and the policy of 'pre-emptive' U.S. military action justifying the war in Iraq.

'Soft power' versus 'hard power' and non-intervention versus intervention

We can now contrast the Bush Doctrine on foreign policy with the 'Obama Doctrine', thanks in part to a widely read interview about just that written by Jeffrey Goldberg in the July 2016 issue of *The Atlantic* magazine. When Obama assumed office, he inherited the monumental task of having to ramp down conflicts initiated by the Bush administration, and a mind-boggling complex bundle of violent, often unconstitutional, costly, counterproductive military 'black ops' operating in multiple countries (which the majority of Americans still know relatively little about). Obama seems to appreciate the extremely limited ability of the U.S. to achieve positive outcomes via military ('hard power') means, particularly large-scale bombings:

> Obama understands that the decision he made to step back from air strikes, and to allow the violation of a red line he himself had drawn to go unpunished, will be interrogated mercilessly by historians. But today that decision is a source of deep satisfaction for him. "I had come into office with the strong belief that the scope of executive power in national-security issues is very broad, but not limitless... I'm very proud of this moment. The overwhelming weight of conventional wisdom and the machinery of our national-security

apparatus had gone fairly far. The perception was that my credibility was at stake, that America's credibility was at stake. And so for me to press the pause button at that moment, I knew, would cost me politically. And the fact that I was able to pull back from the immediate pressures and think through in my own mind what was in America's interest, not only with respect to Syria but also with respect to our democracy, was as tough a decision as I've made – and I believe ultimately it was the right decision to make." This was the moment the president believes he finally broke with what he calls, derisively, the "Washington playbook." "Where am I controversial? When it comes to the use of military power," he said. "That is the source of the controversy. There's a playbook in Washington that presidents are supposed to follow. It's a playbook that comes out of the foreign-policy establishment. And the playbook prescribes responses to different events, and these responses tend to be militarized responses. Where America is directly threatened, the playbook works. But the playbook can also be a trap that can lead to bad decisions. In the midst of an international challenge like Syria, you get judged harshly if you don't follow the playbook, even if there are good reasons why it does not apply."

The task of 'taking out the bad guys' – especially in these days of digital transparency – is often more effectively accomplished via financial restrictions and other 'soft power' initiatives than all-out military adventures. Obama seems to understand that Russian president Vladimir Putin, for example, given his need to bolster his domestic support and weakened economy, would likely welcome a military clash with the U.S., which would in no way serve American interests. The truism 'violence begets violence' is almost always true, especially in the case, to use Obama's words, "When you have a professional army that is well armed and sponsored by two large states (Iran and Russia) who have huge stakes in this, and they are fighting against a farmer, a carpenter, an engineer who started out as protesters and suddenly now see themselves in the midst of a civil conflict … The notion that we could have – in a clean way that didn't commit U.S. military forces – changed the equation on the ground there was never true." (Goldberg 2016). Obama strove to understand the practical limits of U.S. power.

This relatively non-interventionist (as opposed to anti-interventionist) approach contrasted with Democratic Party presidential nominee Hillary Clinton's relatively hawkish 'liberal interventionist' approach. Clinton, who supported the war in Iraq and military intervention in Libya, has been described by colleagues to be 'the quintessential American exceptionalist'. At the time of this writing, most assumed she would be elected president, and were debating whether her foreign policies might end up 'restoring American power in the world', earning her the title 'Bloody Hillary', or something in between. Of course we will never know, as the election played out much differently than most had predicted.

Chapter 4 RESEARCH METHODS

Data sources, methods, design and analysis

By pursuing this study, I consciously place myself as researcher in the centre of Denzin and Lincoln's "eighth (or ninth) moment" of qualitative inquiry as described in their *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2005). The current moment "asks that the social sciences become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community" (2005, p3). The worldview that I bring to this study is perhaps best articulated by Denzin, along with Joe L. Kincheloe and Peter McLaren in their chapter "Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research" in Denzin and Lincoln (2005). After tracing the checkered history of qualitative research and methods, the authors articulate their vision for the future of social science qualitative inquiry thus: "We want a social science that is committed up front to issues of social justice, equity, nonviolence, peace, and universal human rights. We do not want a social science that says it can address these issues if it wants to. For us, that is no longer an option" (2005, p13).[12]

Why would a study attempting to gauge *perceptions* about the defence of dissent and other human rights be best tackled via *qualitative* inquiry, particularly semi-structured interviews? It is clear that I am not attempting, for example, to count the number of rights violations documented in various categories over a designated period of time and to conduct an impact assessment. The study aims to develop and create new conceptualisations and knowledge via interviewer-interviewee interaction, as well as increased international solidarity among those firmly committed to furthering the protection of all human beings from arbitrary detention, torture, murder. I am interested in that 'critical social question', and beyond: How did we get here? How, through mutual respect, cooperation and understanding, might we get to a better place?

Dominant theoretical paradigms informing my story therefore include pragmatism and critical social theory[13] rooted in ideas of social justice – action research that is wary of a

possible descent into the kind of cynical deconstructionism, cultural relativism and/or nihilism that can undermine the value of universal solidarity to alleviate human suffering. While drawing upon the qualitative research traditions of ethnography (understanding cultures and group values), naturalism (understanding contexts) and symbolic interactionism (understanding social processes), the study also takes a phenomenological approach, as it explores the ways in which human beings experience concepts and phenomena (Creswell 2007).

Validity, reliability, generalisability and research quality. 'Validity', which can be described as the "soundness" of a study, is a criteria of research quality emphasising the degree to which a study actually measures what it sets out to measure (Campbell and Stanley 1966; Miller in Given 2008, p910). This study seeks to 'measure' (or more accurately, analyse and interpret) the *perceptions* of key advocates. The quality criterion of 'validity' common in quantitative research fails to correspond neatly to quality requirements for a study investigating human perceptions. How can perceptions be 'measured'? It is not difficult to imagine that a detailed exploration of the perceptions of those on the 'frontlines' of the defence of dissent and other human rights could yield important new knowledge without exhibiting 'robust internal validity' in terms of 'proving' a widely 'generalisable' cause-and-effect correlation of 'observable phenomena'. Such a social 'scientific' (yet entirely qualitative) exploration may open spaces for collaborative researcher-participant dialogue that fosters the creation of new knowledge. Might efforts to protect citizens against arbitrary government actions – bolstered by increasing international solidarity to alleviate human suffering in a digital age, for example – help promote security as well as liberty, both locally and globally? How might a better future look?

The qualitative research criteria developed by Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (1985) proposes alternatives to 'validity' including trustworthiness, authenticity, transferability, and plausibility. Campbell and Stanley's (1966) criteria of 'reliability' as an indicator of research quality, associated with the consistency and/or repeatability of research data, would also be relatively difficult to ensure in relation to many qualitative research studies

given that perceptions are continually changing and are not 'replicable'. Nevertheless, assuming a self-aware, reflexive approach throughout the inquiry process and ensuring that research procedures, results and conclusions are transparent, coherent and convincing, along with post-research activities such as publishing peer-reviewed articles or 'replication' (as opposed to duplication) of the study by other researchers, can bolster the 'reliability' and 'external validity' of the research (Miller in Given 2008, p910; Kvale 1996). As with much qualitative research, the quality criteria of 'authenticity' and multivocality are of crucial relevance to my study of the perceptions of prominent human rights defenders.[14]

Semi-structured interview methods, ethical considerations

Why choose semi-structured interviews over other possible methods for a study of 'key stakeholder' perceptions? Other qualitative methods such as text or discourse analysis, or artistic methods would be possible to employ. This particular pragmatic, action research-oriented study is partly phenomenological in nature, calling for researcher-participant interpretive interaction and dialogue to further mutual understanding. The results of the analysis, published in peer-reviewed academic publications as well as more general public interest pieces, could contribute new knowledge regarding practical issues in the defence of dissent and other human rights across cultural and political divides.

While the definition and place of qualitative research (see for example Levi-Strauss 1962) is rapidly evolving, I share the view that qualitative research can be a particularly useful means for examining human "lives, lived experience, behaviours, emotions, and feelings as well as…organisational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomenon and interactions between nations" (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p11). From the outset of the research, I assume that my own personal views and 'participation' as researcher will necessarily impact the study's findings. Inevitably, "researchers bring their own worldviews, paradigms, or sets of beliefs to the research project, and these inform the conduct and writing of the qualitative study" (Creswell 2007). More than a passive interviewer mining for nuggets of truth, I am a traveller on a journey of discovery together with study participants (Oakley 1981). While the research has an evaluative

element in its treatment of public policies, the primary goal of the study is more explanatory and consultative in nature, aiming to describe with relative detail and consistency the experience of defending dissent from the perspective of leading advocates.

Sampling of study participants. Criteria for the selection of study participants include homogeneous, heterogeneous, convenience or stakeholder (for example) characteristics (Robson 1995; Gilbert 2001; Flick 2009, p123). The study relied on purposive or criterion sampling as opposed to quota sampling, as I sought to deliberatively preselect a group of 15 advocates who possess sustained experience and detailed information related to the everyday practical technicalities of defending dissent and other human rights over an extended period of time. The individuals have spoken out in defence of the victims of state crimes in public fora such as courts, commissions, parliaments, and prominent publications in their attempts to uphold common civil liberties such as freedom of conscience (including religion), speech, association, privacy, property and due process, including the prohibition of torture. In addition to their practical experience defending dissent and the victims of human rights violations, criteria for selection also depended on their 'elite' status as stakeholders in a position to shape relevant policy and/or public opinion on issues of human rights protection (i.e. 'stakeholder sampling'). Such selective identification of a relatively small sample can also be referred to as 'primary selection' or 'criterion sampling' (Robson 1995). Although I had planned for several initial potential participants to assist in the 'network' or 'snowball' sampling process of confirming additional participants (Gilbert 2001) this was not necessary, as I was able to attract more than enough participants based on their trust in me as a researcher based on previous work relations.

Thus, I have chosen a methodology relying primarily on qualitative interviews because I seek to examine the perceptions of a preselected set of defenders of dissent and other human rights, beginning with several underlying assumptions including:

1) the preselected individuals possess sustained experience and detailed information related to the everyday practical and legal technicalities of defending dissent over an extended period of time that can yield important insights contributing to existing knowledge, theory and practice when examined in a systematic way, and
2) the perceptions of the preselected 'elite' interviewees matter, if only for the simple reason that their opinions have influenced relevant national as well as 'elite' opinion and international policies.

Thematic analysis and data management. Coding, the general term for conceptualising data, involves raising questions and giving provisional answers (hypotheses) about categories and relations between two or more categories of data (Strauss 1988, pp20-21). While quantitative researchers often create codes prior to data collection, even using precoded questionnaires, qualitative researchers tend to generate ideas and concepts from raw data such as interview transcripts, fieldnotes, news articles, website documents, archival materials, art (Benaquisto in Given 2008, p85). As long as the rationales and procedures behind the coding process are transparent, researchers can retain reliability of data while remaining relatively open to the emergence of previously unforeseen concepts and themes during the process of data analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994, Strauss and Corbin 1998). The rigourous application of a consistent comparative method based on the central concepts of the study thesis and the maintenance of transparency in the logic and application of methods used throughout the course of research will help ensure the 'rigour', 'validity', or 'trustworthiness' of the study.

Data coding is used to identify and analyse major themes emphasised by respondents. The resulting thematic analysis of field study data (Chapter 6) is divided into two sections. A grounded theory-oriented analysis of participant responses (grounded in the data, e.g. Charmaz 2006) is presented first, followed by an analysis of responses to questions specifically pertaining to two *a priori* hypotheses described in the thesis prior to the production of study data. Six stages of thematic analysis were employed, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation with data, generating initial codes (numbered keywords/phrases), searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes,

defining and naming themes, and writing up findings. Theme frequency, co-occurrence, and relationships between the various themes were noted during the coding process (Boyatis 1998). Emergent concepts, patterns and themes were recorded with the aid of brief analytic memos – sometimes called 'reflexivity journals' – that helped illuminate the relational nature of themes (Lincoln and Guba 1995, Saldana 2009). Following coding and data analysis, given the context-specific nature of responses depending upon geographical location, participant responses are generally presented along the lines of three regional categories: 1) Central and Eastern European countries, 2) majority Muslim countries, and 3) global (based in Europe, the U.K., and U.S.).

Ethical considerations. Although included here as a final consideration, proper ethical treatment is of primary importance throughout the qualitative research process. As Bulmer (2001) notes: "Ethics is a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others. Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if, in the extreme case, the respect of human dignity leaves one ignorant of human nature." Maintaining such "principled sensitivity" is essential throughout each stage of the process when conducting any qualitative research project. However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p228) point out: "…as researchers, and as consumers of research, we must make judgements about what is and is not legitimate in particular cases. And we should be prepared to support our judgements with arguments". Likewise, Miller and Boulton (2007) warn that "ethical universalism" carries with it inherent dangers in an ever-changing, uncertain world.

Study participants were provided with an information sheet elaborating the primary investigator's position and purpose for conducting the study, a topic guide of interview questions, requirements of participants including the amount of time estimated to participate, rationale for selecting the participants, techniques for insuring the anonymity of participants and anyone named in interviews, data protection and storage protocols, proposed uses and publication venues. Although study participants were provided with the option of having their data anonymised, none of them chose to anonymise their responses.

Ethnography, Bourdieu's *reflexivity* and Flyvjberg's *'real social science'*

Given the relevance of personal experience to the topic of this study, and inspired by Bourdieu's concept of 'reflexive' social science and Flyvjberg's 'phronetic' social science, I employ ethnographic methods in Chapter 5. Ethnography can help contextualise complex events within a particular time, place, and perspective. Derived from the Greek *ethos* (a people, nation, culture) and *graphy* (field of study), and with roots in anthropology ("the study or description of human beings or human nature" OED 2016) – ethnography is the "systematic study and description of peoples, societies, and cultures" (OED 2014). Ethnographic field studies and case reports take a reflexive view on systems of meaning and knowledge within cultures, attempting to explain not only behaviour, but also context and meaning (Geertz 1973). Critical ethnographers address their own perspective and biases in field work, based on the assumption that social research is inherently political as well as pedagogical, and can address issues of social inequality and power relationships (Thomas 1993, Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

Bourdieu's reflexivity. Matthew Eagleton-Pierce explains in his article *Advancing a Reflexive International Relations* how scholars might conceptualise Bourdieusian reflexivity (2011, p70-72, bold emphasis mine):

> Bourdieu's notion of reflexivity, like his social theory more broadly, is intensely political, asking the analyst to conduct mutual and self-criticism. In the process of uncovering the deeper motivations involved in the production of research, reflexivity offers for Bourdieu an almost 'therapeutic function insofar as increasing awareness of the social determinants of behaviour increases the possibility for freedom from the unknown'… The game-like logic of the academy is mirrored in the game-like logic of politics: both are founded on a relational struggle for recognition and, ultimately, forms of power... ***In these fields, every viewpoint, for Bourdieu, is a view taken from a particular point in space and time…*** Through developing the reflexive instinct, one can contribute, in metatheoretical terms, to an IR that uses social-scientific techniques in a twin move so as to unravel the political world through a simultaneous critical questioning of the scholar in their social milieu.

In his book *Real Social Science*, Oxford professor Bent Flyvbjerg relies on Aristotle's understanding of *phronesis* – informed by Bourdieu, Foucault and other thinkers – to try and address this problem of 'rational' decontextualization in the practice of social research. Aristotle evidently viewed *phronesis* (practical wisdom) – as the highest of the three 'intellectual virtues' including *episteme* (universal truth) and *techne* (technical know-how), given that the latter two cannot be managed in the absence of practical

wisdom. Flyvbjerg may be overly optimistic about the practical possibilities of 'phronetic social science', especially in non-western contexts. The 'phronetic social science' case studies described in his book, however, mirror almost exactly our successful international policy fellows' programme and their projects in philosophical outlook, epistomology and methodology. In one chapter, Canadian sociologist Arthur Frank writes (Flyvjberg 2012, p57, bold emphasis mine):

> Feel for the game is one level of phronesis in Bourdieu's thinking, adequate for actors who remain in whatever field has closest affinity to their initial habitus. ***Actors who try to understand other fields, either academically or to enter and compete in those fields, must move to a different level.*** Bourdieu's writing teaches the capacity to suspend the *illusio* of one field in order to perceive the stakes of another, and then suspend those stakes in order to return to the original field... Practical wisdom begins in asking how the field to which our habitus is most suited conditions the observations - which are too often projections - of other fields. The practical wisdom of social science includes perceiving the comparative 'non-communicability' between different fields (Bourdieu 2000, p11) and recognizing that the scholastic disposition is as non-communicable as any other. Phronesis for the social scientist is having...sufficient reflexive control over which stakes are taken seriously for which purposes. **The game for which the scholastic must develop a feel involves this *movement between* fields, becoming caught up in one field's stakes and then suspending that engagement. There is a profound ethics and a politics in this capacity for alternating engagement, if one understands the world today is fraught between groups incapable of grasping what is at stake for other groups.** Each group's investment is a measure of its *inability* to communicate. *Illusio* is what makes living possible, but also what makes living together dangerous.

Chapter 5 RESEARCH CONTEXT:
CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY IN TWO CASE STUDIES

Personal history related to the study

One could say that I 'came of age' experiencing first-hand many of the events surrounding the collapse of the Soviet Union and its communist ideological foundations. I witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall as an American student at Oxford visiting Berlin in 1989, spent the summer at Moscow State University in 1990 as one of the few U.S.-U.S.S.R. exchange students, worked as one of the first post-Soviet American members of the Union of Russian Journalists in 1993-94 covering events including the attempted coup, studied under several of the original drafters of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and earned graduate degrees in human rights and Russian and East European studies from Columbia University in New York, and worked for over 15 years for the Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute in Budapest, supporting 'open society' (Popper 1945) fellows in former Soviet states and globally. The international policy fellowships programme that I established – which was selected by the United Nations as a 'good practice' program for achieving Millennium Development Goals (Carlos and Theisohn 2003) – diverged from the typical foreign aid programme funding western-based consultants to carry out projects abroad, or locally based consultants advising western-based bosses. Instead, it provided support, training and funding for fellows with graduate degrees and practical experience to conduct projects in their home countries, thereby helping prevent brain drain while increasing the likelihood of local project ownership and long-term sustainability.

As a young student, journalist and researcher, I had been welcomed into several 'worlds' in Russia and Eastern Europe previously off limits for most westerners, not to mention most Americans, during that brief period of unprecedented openness in the late 1980s and early 1990s – a level of openness to 'outsiders' that may never be repeated in my lifetime and beyond. Although closely guarded, being an American student in the Soviet capital in 1990 was exhilarating, with many people eager to shake my hand, share a coffee, talk about the Beatles. As one of the first post-Soviet foreign members of Russia's Union of

Journalists in 1993-4, I gained access to institutions, territories, historical documents in Russia that few if any Americans had previously seen. I interviewed gulag survivors still held in state institutions, oligarchs benefiting from the mass privatisation of state assets as millions fell into poverty, and full scale urban warfare between presidential and parliamentary supporters in October 1993 that left scores of other journalists and demonstrators dead. By the time I left in 1994, the brief era of Russian-American friendship was already succumbing to disillusionment, as Harvard adviser Jeffrey Sachs (who would later become UN 'war on poverty czar') and others overseeing 'shock therapy' had left the country, more and more 'security' agents were knocking on the doors of joint-venture partners demanding larger shares of profits, Russian tanks had rolled into Chechnya, and it was becoming increasingly clear that most of the 'new' wealth being generated would be reserved for a privileged few. Many Russian leaders I interviewed at the time who remain influential oligarchs were frank – their aim was to attract foreign investment and gain influence in global financial circles to rebuild their failed economy 'like China' – to 'liberalise' the economy in the short term and join the global neoliberal economic order, while maintaining a closed political system.

Promising new partnerships and international nongovernmental (NGO) programmes flourished in the late 1980s and 1990s following the collapse of the former Soviet Union and end of the Cold War. Sadly, this opening was short-lived. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 may have pried open a window behind the Iron Curtain to a decade of relatively unfettered globalisation, but the following decade saw a redrawing of the curtains.

Shaking hands with an East German guard during
the fall of the Berlin Wall, November 1989 (photo by the author)

By the end of the 1990s, much of the initial excitement about the possibilities for steady post-Soviet democratisation had given way to disillusionment and alarm about *elite capture* and the consolidation of oligarchical power in a multipolar world – not only in Russia, but also in the United States and a number of established 'western' democracies (Nations in Transit 2000, Freedom House 2000, Carothers 2003). Realities on the ground appeared more and more like the dawning of an age of relatively violent oligarchs (Volkov 2005). The promises of Russian industrialists whom I had interviewed in the early 1990s to adhere to the 'China model' seemed to be coming to fruition. What my fellowships programme academic co-adviser and friend Kian Tajbakhsh wrote about the impact of globalisation in Tehran in the 2000s could also be said about Moscow in the 1990s: "What I initially thought was the beginning of the "Spring" when I arrived to stay in 2001 was, in retrospect, the downturn towards its end" (Tajbakhsh 2009). As an Iranian-American New Yorker who had earned his doctorate from Columbia University and had been teaching at the New School for Social Research, he was arriving Iran to

undertake several research projects after experiencing the 9/11 attacks in New York (Tajbakhsh 2001):

> Earlier that day [in New York, soon after the attacks], I watched the memorial service for the victims held in Washington Memorial Cathedral. US presidents, congressmen, senators and other influential persons filed into the pews of this imposing structure. The alter area was full of flags and large crosses. I was interested to hear what the Christian men of the cloth were going to say. I didn't really know what to expect but the service turned out to be a very interesting event, little commented upon in the press as far as I am aware. There were several clergymen who spoke: the black bishop of the cathedral, a Jewish rabbi and the head of a National Islamic Association – representing the multicultural religious life of America. The black priest was impressive. Facing some of the most powerful politicians on earth, he told them that any action taken by the US in response to the attacks should live up to the highest ideals of this country, the respect for individual liberty and the democratic constitution. If the reaction of the US violated those moral and ethical standards – for example by the singling out of Americans because they were Muslims – then the US would be no better than terrorists themselves. This was a powerful and brave reminder, and it seemed perfectly suited to the occasion and delivered with just the right measure of authority.

Several years later, he would fall victim to backlash against the violent U.S. response to the attacks, targeted by the Iranian government as an American.

Case one (Russian Federation):

Crackdowns, cover-ups, state narratives, state symbolic violence – media control at all costs

In Moscow, my realisation about 'the end of the spring' came as early as October 1993, while working as a journalist for Russia's first partially western-owned publication, *Moscow Magazine* (predecessor to the *Moscow Times*), covering the attempted coup by rebel parliamentarians, also called the 'constitutional crisis'.

Onlookers gather around the shelled Russian parliament (the 'White House') following the 'constitutional crisis' of October 1993 (photo by the author)

There was a palpable fear – following the dissolution of the Soviet Union – that Russia was descending into civil war. Unlike dozens of other journalists, students and bystanders, I was lucky to escape the tank and automatic weapons fire that left some 200 dead, mostly civilians and dozens of local and western journalists. From my perspective, both Russian President Boris Yeltsin's elite forces and the militia backing the rebel parliamentarian group led by Alexsander Rutskoi were guilty of initiating violence and using innocent civilians as pawns or human shields at various stages during the realpolitik chess game, in which control of the Ostankino television tower – media

control – equaled checkmate *'Lenin style'* (to use a description given by many locals at the time) in the eyes of the authorities. The parliamentary 'rebels' obviously led a violent coup attempt, but it was clear that **'leaders' on all sides considered public perception more important than reality, and were willing to sacrifice innocents for control of the public narrative regardless of the facts on the ground**.

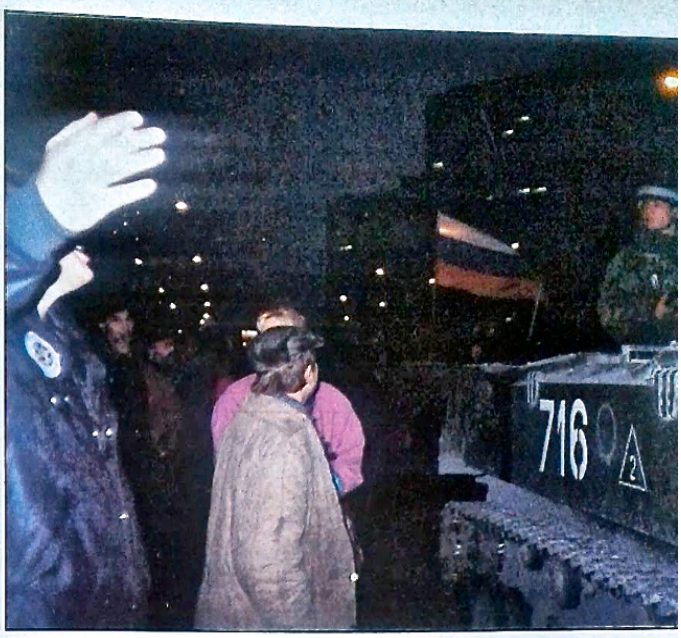
In many ways, the hope sparked in 1989 that 'democratic' leaders in both Russia and the U.S. might begin to consider the interests of the majority of citizens as much as the interests of military-industrial special interest groups died along with those gunned down in 1993. President Boris Yeltsin's special forces from the Interior Ministry (Vityaz) indiscriminately gunned down a crowd of some 50 onlookers and mostly unarmed anti-Yeltsin protesters at the Ostankino television center in Moscow, many of them journalists (de Waal 1993, Kilpadi 1993). Vityaz was later also implicated in committing gross human rights violations in the Chechen Wars. *New York Times* photojournalist Otto Pohl, shot during the Ostankino siege, returned to Russia some ten years later and met the Vityaz sniper who shot him. Much to his surprise, these soldiers remain traumatised by the experience, and continue to hold an annual memorial service inside the building to honor the victims, while mourners from the 'other side' gather outside to mourn their dead (Pohl 2003).

The OMON forces "protecting" the crowd of pro-Yeltsin demonstrators who gathered that afternoon to watch the government's final clash with pro-parliament rebels neglected to warn us that snipers had infiltrated the buildings surrounding us on Novy Arbat. Several spectators looked up suspiciously at windows, but remained oblivious of the danger. Had I been warned that snipers had participated in the morning battle I witnessed, I would not have been caught on that same street several hours later, huddled in a dark courtyard against a stone wall while bullets wizzed all around me. About 50 of us frantically helped each other over the wall, only to be chased by automatic weapons fire down two back alleys. A woman who had attended my language program was among the victims of a nearby shootout.

That residents were not evacuated from the area and that people were allowed to wander freely while Moscow's heaviest fighting since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution raged on reflected the failure of Russia's post-Soviet security forces to adequately define their protective duties. Their first obligation should have been to protect civilians, but the demonstrators seemed to serve the military as human shields. Just when the threat arose that the Kremlin might be stormed, for example, the government called on its supporters to gather.

It is frightening to have seen so much needless bloodshed in the seemingly safe capital of a nuclear superpower, where the former vice president rallied violence rather than votes. Despite ample warning of Sunday's siege, it appeared that government and police forces had no clear plan of action. Troops including Yeltsin's "special Alpha unit" crack commandos waited until the attempted takeover of the Ostankino television tower had claimed scores of lives before deciding to rebuff the insurgency by 10,000 rioters.

Yeltsin may have succeeded in mustering up the support of the military, incarcerating his rivals and ending the political struggle that has dominated Russia's brief



(page from an October 1993 article by the author)

October 1993, defending 'shock therapy' in Russia (photos by the author)

Such was the rapid pace of change in Russia at the time that these 'real life' experiences contrasted sharply with the Russian 'realities' often presented by the Sovietologists teaching some of my graduate school courses at Columbia University in the mid 1990s. I recall a particularly revealing statement made by then U.S. Treasury Department undersecretary Larry Summers – a former World Bank economist and Reagan Administration adviser deeply involved in the Clinton Administration's effort to bail out Russia, who established a project with the Harvard Institute of International Development that later became the focus of scandal when conflicts of interest were discovered with advisers investing in Russian privatisation, who also served as Harvard's president and in 2009-10 directed Obama's National Economic Council. He told students that although the United States would like to extend more aid to countries for social programs such as health and education, most officials are only interested in receiving money for large infrastructure projects because they provide the greatest opportunities to receive personal kickbacks. It was not until I read former World Bank economist and Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz's article 'Who Lost Russia?' in his influential 2001 book *Globalization and Its Discontents* that I realised the full extent of the *elite capture* that had taken place during the course of Russian privatisation. Stiglitz provided an extraordinarily vivid, intimate portrait of the ready made communism-to-capitalism, get-rich-quick program undertaken by Russian leaders in the 1990s, assisted by their western advisers. For many keen observers of so-called 'post-Soviet transition' (e.g. see Carothers 2003) at that time, the article was a bombshell – a candid description from a World Bank insider of the ugly underbelly of 'Washington Consensus market fundamentalism' and its collusion with robber-baron oligarchs – lords of state-sponsored pyramid schemes in the absence of adequate competition and regulatory frameworks to reign in the monopolies they controlled. A take-no-prisoners account of the often senseless devastation wrought on average citizens by yet another dangerously powerful, utopian ideology.

Although the devastation of 'the shock doctrine' (Klein 2008) had been experienced in multiple countries and contexts and was painfully obvious to millions of its hapless victims, when 'Who Lost Russia?' was published in 2001, there were still pitifully few

voices brave or influential enough to question the triumphant orthodoxy. Words of warning by public intellectuals seemed to go unheard about the self-styled 'anti-socialist' conservative onslaught of those claiming to have 'won the Cold War'. The European ideal of 'civilised capitalism' so revered from the postwar 1950s through the 1970s seemed to be waning, and a possible return to the failed economics of nineteenth-century Manchester liberalism or the pre-war Weimar Republic loomed large (e.g. Grass and Bourdieu 2002).

Today of course, public discourse has shifted. Stiglitz's account now seems depressingly familiar, almost dull amid the constant stream of popular academic treatises (e.g. Harvey 2005, Klein 2008, Piketty 2013) attempting to decode the supposedly trickle-down but practically trickle-up neoliberal policies unleashed around 1980 that evidently justified the 'greatest capital theft in the history of modern capitalism' (LRB 2010). The headlines seem filled with stories of greedy Wall Street traders, bankers, insurers and other market 'winners' pillaging and hoarding their multi-million jackpot winnings including taxpayer-funded bailout funds, along with draconian election-time hatemongering exploiting the populism of identity politics rather than promoting the benefits of equal rights and democratic citizenship. Just another case of an unbridled 'new colonialism' in the name of 'freedom' by 'free' market fundamentalists, bolstered by often brutal state and non-state security services. And yet, perhaps especially given our current state of worn-out jadedness, amid massive taxpayer bailouts in the U.S. and elsewhere, the threat of Eurozone meltdown, widespread youth unemployment and popular discontent, the story of the publicly funded 'bailouts' that served as a backdrop to the large-scale impoverishment of Russians at the hands of some of the richest oligarchs and investors is worth a re-examination:

> The government was virtually giving away its state assets, yet it was unable to provide pensions for the elderly or welfare payments for the poor. The government was borrowing billions from the IMF, becoming increasingly indebted, while the oligarchs, who had received such largesse from the government, were taking billions out of the country... The rickety tower collapsed when oil prices fell... When the IMF was confronted with the facts – that billions of dollars that it had given (loaned) Russia was showing up in Cypriot and Swiss bank accounts just days after the loan was made – it claimed that these weren't their dollars. The argument demonstrated either a remarkable lack of understanding of economics or a level of disingenuousness... The IMF had lent Russia the dollars – funds that allowed Russia, in turn, to give its oligarchs the dollars to take out of the country. Some of us quipped that the IMF would have made life

easier all around if it had simply sent the money directly into the Swiss and Cypriot accounts. It was, of course, not just the oligarchs who benefited from the rescue. The Wall Street and other Western investment bankers, who had been among those pressing the hardest for a rescue package, knew it would not last: they too took the short respite provided by the rescue to rescue as much as they could, to flee the country with whatever they could salvage. By lending Russia money for a doomed cause, IMF policies led Russia into deeper debt, with nothing to show for it. The cost of the mistake was not borne by the IMF officials who gave the loan, or America who had pushed for it, or the Western bankers and the oligarchs who benefited from the loan, but by the Russian taxpayer.

The Russian public received an extremely bitter dose of 'government bailout at taxpayers' expense', some 15 years before the infamous global financial crash and US government bailout. It is not difficult to see why such massive public-to-private capital theft requires an ultra-orthodox ideology (preferably bolstered by 'alien' threats) to be popularly accepted. Once Russian officials had secured sufficient foreign investment and offshore bank accounts to play the global financial stage, their wide-scale crackdown on civil society began. Speaking about this global crackdown against non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in 2016, the director of Columbia University's Harriman Institute for Russian, Eurasian and Eastern European studies Alexander Cooley explained:

The most extreme of these [anti-civil society] laws are in Russia where you have the foreign agents law, where NGOs that take foreign funds have to self identify as foreign agents, thereby stigmatizing their activities, and the new undesirable organizations law, which criminalizes their activities and association with them… ***Populist rulers around the world have seen there isn't a lot of backlash to cracking down on NGO activity, and that they haven't really been reprimanded for it. [Laws targeting civil society] play into this populist politics, this idea that foreign NGOs are a subversive external force that are going to destabilize politics.***

Time and time again, targeting the 'weak' and relatively defenceless to bolster their power has been key to the 'success' of authoritarian and dictatorial rulers the world over – the bullies on the playground. When the weak are also attempting to speak truth to power and voice dissent by exposing the crimes of powerful bullies, the risk of violent backlash runs high. As the constitutional crisis of October 1993 and subsequent conflicts demonstrate, to preserve the state's post-truth narrative – the basis of its symbolic power – post-Soviet Russian officials have not hesitated to attack peaceful dissenters. October 1993 effectively extinguished hopes for a truly democratic turn in Russia, complete with independent media and civil society, and opened the door for a lifetime KGB officer to assume power. President Putin smothers dissent, muzzles the press, and exploits fear-mongering and scapegoating to consolidate power, twisting the truth to create false

realities and perceptions, just as he has been trained to do. As the renowned survivor and scholar of totalitarianism Hannah Arendt warned in 1974:

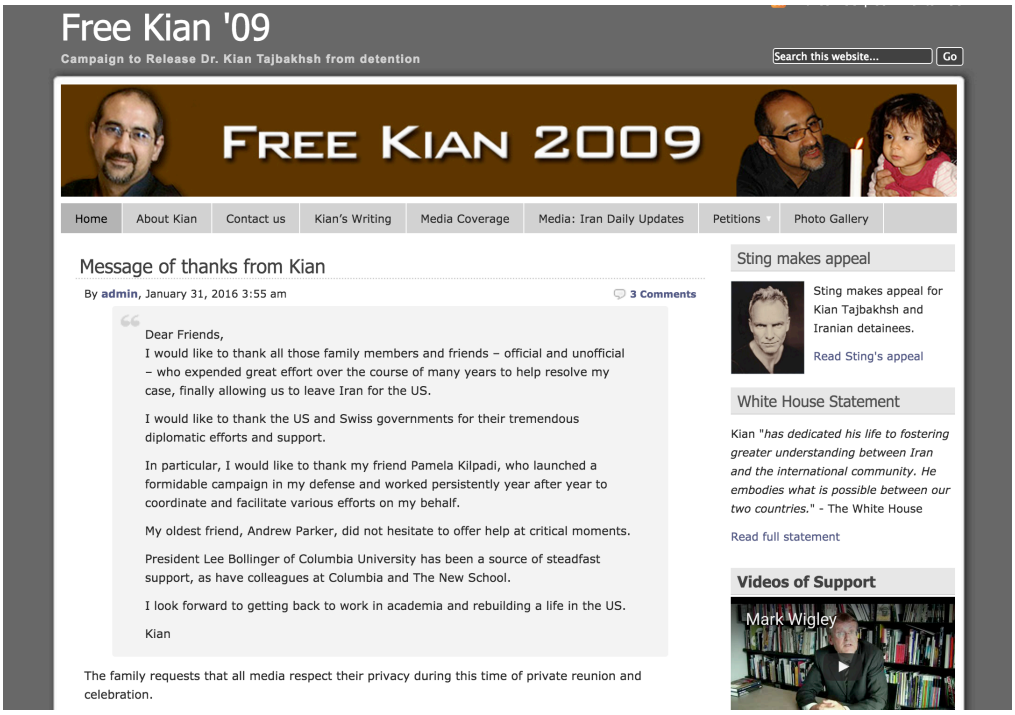
> The moment we no longer have a free press, anything can happen. What makes it possible for a totalitarian or any other dictatorship to rule is that people are not informed; how can you have an opinion if you are not informed? If everybody always lies to you, the consequence is not that you believe the lies, but rather that nobody believes anything any longer. This is because lies, by their very nature, have to be changed, and a lying government has constantly to rewrite its own history. On the receiving end you get not only one lie—a lie which you could go on for the rest of your days—but you get a great number of lies, depending on how the political wind blows. And a people that no longer can believe anything cannot make up its mind. It is deprived not only of its capacity to act but also of its capacity to think and to judge. And with such a people you can then do what you please.

Case two (Islamic Republic of Iran):
Crackdowns, cover-ups, show trials, hostage-takings –
the practice of state symbolic violence

A more recent chapter of this post-Cold War coming-of-age story saw the global anti-civil society crackdown lead to false accusations by Iran's Revolutionary Guards – evidently prompted by a Russian intelligence *disinformation* campaign (Peterson 2010, Fakhravar 2016) – that Kian and I were 'Soros spies' attempting to foment a 'velvet revolution' in Iran backed by the United States government. If not so serious, being demonised for supposedly attempting to foment a 'velvet revolution' sounded comical, not only given our positions as relatively independent scholars who had left the Soros Foundations years earlier, but also given our positive reading of the 1968 Velvet Revolution against the Soviets in Czechoslovakia. Increasingly, George Soros had come to represent the evil embodiment of dark 'liberal elite' forces for anti-global, often anti-Semitic extreme right and left conspiracy theorists in many countries. As former employees working as unaffiliated, independent scholars in touch with many researchers, we were easy targets swept up in a sudden, unimaginable convulsion – Iran's greatest political and popular upheaval since the 1979 revolution, which would later be called the first case of a "citizen journalism"-led mass protest movement – a precursor to the Arab Spring (Thomas 2010). Following Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's apparently rigged re-election, Iran scholar and journalist Robin Wright noted in 2009: "Although embryonic, today's public resolve [in Iran] is reminiscent of civil disobedience in colonial India before independence or in the American Deep South in the 1960s." The gruesome murder in the streets of a young protester named Neda Soltani (the name 'Neda' means 'voice' in Persian) shot by a government sniper had been broadcast throughout the world and heralded as a rallying cry against Ahmadinejad's allegedly rigged re-election and the cruel regime, prompting even more millions of angry Iranians to take to the streets. The regime – caught in the throws of a partial military coup by its Revolutionary Guards – lashed out viciously.

In July 2009 amidst the chaos on the streets, Kian was taken from his home by this hard-line Guards unit, accused of sharing information with the outside world about Neda's

death – which, of course, thousands had already done – and disappeared. His family asked (as he himself had also requested in the event of an arrest) that I serve as his/the family's representative with officials, the media, friends – something they could not do for reasons of safety and lack of relevant information and contacts. I spoke with the Associated Press and other media outlets, alerting them about the fact that an American had been kidnapped (initially his whereabouts were unknown) and warning about the possibility of an impending "show trial" based on both current and past evidence. In 2007, Kian had already been targeted by authorities due to his Soros connections, had spent over four months in solitary confinement and was forced to make televised "statements". His captors had even tried to pressure me and other Soros Foundations colleagues at the time to provide (non-existent) insider information about Soros's involvement in the 'Orange Revolution' in Georgia. We ('the family') launched an independent blog to report the facts on the ground. Documents were exchanged with the U.S. State Department authorising me to represent the case in official communications. I avoided using my name in published pieces for fear of harming Kian, but provided information received first-hand by friends, relatives, bloggers, journalists inside Iran and around the world to senior officials and editors and journalists at major news outlets, who were only authorised to speak with me about the case (every U.S. mainstream publication has a 'security editor' who clears national security-related stories with officials). Regardless of the lack of evidence, Iranian officials evidently believed that the Soros connection alone could sway the public to accept a guilty verdict. The execution of a supposed American 'Soros spy' bent on regime change would divert attention away from what was bound to be a large public protest in honour of the anniversary of Neda's death.



I was suddenly forced to take up the position of the 'citizen journalist', the 'dissenter' countering Iran's official narrative – a thorn in the side of the regime (often both the Iranian and U.S. 'regimes') and a 'voice' for many whose relatives and friends were being killed, imprisoned, tortured amidst the post-election chaos in Iran. Our AP story about a possible impending "show trial" (a key *battle-concept*) was published in Persian media inside Iran and caused a furor among officials, who argued about whether to hold the trial in public or in secret (the public, maximum symbolic impact option prevailed). News organisations around the world began calling my home day and night. European diplomats in Tehran sent panicked warning messages of plans for execution. Prosecutors of the Islamic Revolutionary Court threatened me personally via relatives, warning that they would torture Kian and keep him in prison for life if I did not "shut up". Articles about the case and trial in the *New York Times* and other publications were immediately countered by 'opposition' officials in mainstream publications. Iranian officials attempted to trick relatives into sharing false, overly positive information with U.S. publications. There were plenty of Iranian lawyers, journalists, even officials eager to help, but no one seemed to have any power over the clique of hard-line hostage-takers within the Guards.

Although I was physically a world away, it felt as if I were in the courtroom of the show trial, countering the claims of prosecutors and defending those denied access to representation, family or friends and pressured to give forced confessions. The description of the show trial in Wikipedia, for example, names me as a "critic of the prosecution" (the prosecution being the Islamic Revolutionary Court of the Islamic Republic of Iran) and notes that the prosecution threatened to "prosecute doubters":

Accused [edit]

On August 1, 2009 110 people were put on trial, including prominent reformists, journalists and writers. Among them were former Vice president Mohammad Ali Abtahi, former government spokesman Abdollah Ramezanzadeh, former Deputy Speaker of the Parliament and Industry Minister Behzad Nabavi, reformist lawmaker Ali Tajernia, Shahaboddin Tabatabaei, journalist Ahmad Zeidabadi, and others. Other people put on trial include French Embassy employee, Nazak Afshar, nine British Embassy employees, including the Iranian-American scholar Kian Tajbakhsh, Hossein Rassam, Newsweek correspondent Maziar Bahari, and French academic Clotilde Reiss.[6] On August 16, 25 more defendants were added to the trial.[5]

Throughout the trials, family members of the defendants and others gathered in front of the court to condemn the trial. Witnesses reported that riot police attacked the protesters outside the court. The wife of detained reformist lawmaker Ali Tajernia was arrested while outside the court.[7]

On August 28, President Ahmadinejad called on judiciary officials to "decisively" and "mercilessly" prosecute those "who organized, incited and pursued the plans of the enemies," remarks called "clearly aimed at Mir Hussein Moussavi, Mehdi Karroubi, Mohammad Khatami, and Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.[8]

Charges and confessions [edit]

The charges included "rioting", "vandalism" and "acting against national security", "disturbing public order," having ties with counter-revolutionary groups according to official sources.[9][10]

In a press conference shown on state television several of the defendants - Abtahi, Kian Tajbakhsh, Maziar Bahari - made confessions and withdrew charges against the election results that some of them had made earlier. Critics of the prosecution and the confessions by the accused, such as Pamela Kilpadi, say the confessions, "have been forced under duress from (people) being held in an undisclosed location without access to a lawyer, family, or friends, in violation of the human rights treaties to which Iran is supposedly a signatory,"[11] Prosecutors have warned against questioning the legitimacy of the trial, threatening to prosecute doubters.[12] The prosecutor read an indictment on August 8, 2009, that accused United States and Britain of stoking the unrest in an attempt to create a "soft overthrow" of the Iranian government.[6] Another detainee allegedly confessed to spying for the United Arab Emirates Intelligence Ministry as well as the United States.[13]

Prosecution [edit]

The prosecution is led by Saeed Mortazavi, the Prosecutor General of Tehran,[14] who has been called a "hardliner" for his role in the death of Iranian-Canadian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi,[15] and the shutting down of 60 pro-reform newspapers.[16] The sentences for the charges range from a short imprisonment to capital punishment.[14]

Complaints about access and rights [edit]

I was a solitary, independent scholar and mother of a small child, working from my family's home in upstate New York – charged with waging 'comic war' (Jeurgensmeyer 2003) with nothing more than a laptop – directly impacting the actions of the leaders not only of my own country, but also those of a country half a world away. The initial 'hope' was that Kian would be deemed 'useful' enough as a bargaining chip in a prisoner exchange to spare his life (many Iranians and several foreigners caught up in the crackdown were not so fortunate), after which time hostage negotiations could begin as to how to free him. At a time when radical conservatives in Israel and the U.S. Congress were clamouring to bomb Iran's suspected nuclear program and potentially spark another major war in the Middle East, a radically conservative branch of the Revolutionary Guards that had launched a partial coup – and whose standing in the power hierarchy could benefit from such conflict – was threatening to publicly execute an American. It was up to me and as many powerful allies we could get (including President Obama,

Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry, National Security Council special adviser to the president and later U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul, secret military interlocutors, senior diplomatic mediators in Austria, Oman, Switzerland and Turkey, senior religious figures et al) to try and stop them. It felt as if I had woken up in an alternate reality to find myself a character in a surreal Hollywood adaptation of a Le Carré spy novel, or perhaps a Bridge of Spies/Homeland/Argo movie mashup…only it was all terrifyingly real. Both the Revolutionary Guards and senior U.S. officials understood fully well that (in addition to murdering a friend) the public execution of an American by Iran could push nuclear-armed Israel closer than ever to launching a bombing raid on Iran's nascent nuclear program – to strike and drag the United States into yet another war in the Middle East. A war potentially involving nuclear weapons. The stakes could not be higher.

Foucault, Arendt, Bourdieu, Marx have much to say about how dictatorships thrive on psychological, symbolic warfare in their attempts to hide their violence and cover up their crimes, but this dynamic seems to take on a new dimension in an 'age of transparency' with access to 'new media'. The thought occurred to me many times that such a scenario could never have happened at any other moment in history – new media had changed the world forever. I thereby learned through first-hand experience that 'symbolic' violence imposed by states is real – with real, physical consequences. There were many times while struggling to save my friend from torture and execution when I sincerely wished to take his place in prison, simply to be able to engage in actual, physical, 'real' struggle (violence) with 'the enemy' rather than 'symbolic' (and yet just as real) psychological torture. Why would any regime choose to resort to physical violence when they could achieve their aims using 'only' symbolic violence by secretly destroying the reputation and livelihood of an 'opponent', while still maintaining some public perception of moral authority? For symbolic violence to work most effectively, however, it must be reinforced by physical violence. Over the past decade alone thousands of political prisoners without access to media – kept secretly behind bars while their families kept quiet, believing their loved ones would be safe if they only remained silent – have been

tortured, with hundreds suddenly taken without notice and executed. Still, families remain silent, fearing retribution.

Kian's captors understood fully well that the best way to 'control' and dominate someone is to threaten their loved ones. The irony, which members of 'intelligence' services who fabricate and propagate conspiracy theories know fully well, is that accusing someone of being a 'spy' or some sort of 'illegal' is an easy way to turn fabrications into at least partial realities given that it is a charge that is virtually impossible to disprove, and that those accused who are attempting to free their loves ones or themselves need to be in close contact with senior officials to do so (often further implicating them). In addition to supposedly having participated in 'sedition', we represented one of Iranian officials' only back-door 'diplomatic' channels through which to try and influence 'the Great Satan' – an 'enemy state' with which they had no formal diplomatic relations. Therefore, during nearly the entire period that the Obama Administration was in power, we were used as occasional go-betweens in the U.S.-Iran mediation leading up to the first direct negotiations since 1979 that involved secret deals linked to Kian's 2010 release from prison and which culminated in the 2016 Nuclear Deal and prisoner exchange. This deal is often touted as the centrepiece of Obama's foreign policy 'long game' – the deal that finally allowed (with our mediation) for Kian's release from virtual house arrest in Iran.

Interacting with all branches of government as well as the press, international diplomats and various leaders over the course of nearly ten years provided unique insights into the complex working of elite geopolitics. I learned that it is useful to think of the U.S. Government in global terms as a kind of modern Rome – the Center of the Empire – waging battles on multiple fronts with 'peripheral' opponents engaged in asymmetrical warfare. Whether it is al Qaeda or the Taliban or ISIL carrying out suicide bomb attacks, or the Guards engaging in hostage-takings, or the Russians provoking cyber-war, one of the primary aims of these 'opponents' – most of whom are trying to fend off threats to their authority and legitimacy at home – is almost always to provoke and get the attention of the U.S. Government. Simply provoking a U.S. response helps boost not only their domestic and regional legitimacy but also their bargaining power, especially if they are

able to engage the U.S. in actual battle. Furthermore, U.S. military occupation and bombings always provoke anti-U.S. 'blowback' reactions and almost always increase rather than decrease levels of violence. This does not mean that the U.S. should retreat into some form of isolationism, but it means that there are almost always better ways to go about 'defeating enemies' than outright bombing campaigns. For the Russian military, the strategic advantage might involve 'divide and rule' disinformation campaigns and elections interference via cyber-war. For someone at the U.S. Treasury Department, the best way to counter terrorism is by thwarting the flow of money. The key to the successful use of power is understanding the complex range of possibilities, and knowing the limitations of what you can and cannot do.

From this vantage point it also became clear how central interpersonal relations (even personal vendettas) are in the *field* of elite politics, and how structure often trumps agency in the relatively slow-moving State Department or Congress, while agency and action often trumps structure at the executive offices of the White House, or the secret channels of the military agencies or contractors. We soon learned that the case was linked to an on-going secret 'black ops' war between the U.S./Israel and Iran initiated and undertaken by the previous administration(s) involving assassinations, kidnappings, cyber attacks, prisoner exchanges on both sides (see for example Goldman and Nakashima 2015), which President Obama was steadfastly attempting to de-escalate – to buck the trend of the 'Washington playbook' dictating primarily hard power 'solutions' (Goldberg 2016). As a relatively neutral insider-outsider, I was able to experience in practice how *fields* are established *across* contexts or habitus, and how (not unlike our policy fellows) such in-between movement of actors between fields can be fertile ground for mediation between hardened positions. I suspect that a primary reason that we were able to maintain the attention of senior interlocutors and be considered in communications about relevant White House statements, Obama's Nobel Peace Prize speech, closed meetings was because we were coming from a position of moral authority with *ethical capital*, had immediate access to the means for quickly publicising information, and possessed knowledge and information that was of potential use to the interlocutors. Access to and respect within the most senior corridors of power meant that those eager to influence an

effort of strategic importance to the Administration were eager to assist in any way they could, without compensation. This is an example of what the IR literature terms *social power* (in contrast to 'hard power') – the power to scale up norms and values to the global level (van Ham 2010, p8), and establish those norms as legitimate and desirable "without resorting to coercion or payment" (p80). Social power achieved via *symbolic power* (or soft power) alone – "the power to constitute the given by enunciating it, to make people see and believe, to confirm or transform the vision of the world, and thereby action upon the world, and thus the world itself" (Bourdieu 1991, p170). It has been claimed in several publications that, along with several other family representatives of hostages, our back channel information-sharing, mediation and peace-promoting activities between parties helped pave the way for the negotiations between the U.S. and Iran that culminated in the Nuclear Deal (e.g. Solomon 2015).

Holiday greetings from The White House

At one point amid this dangerous power play after I had published an editorial defending Kian, his mother informed me that his interrogator had questioned him about the editorial. I had quoted George Orwell's *1984*: "If the Party could thrust its hand into the past and say of this or that event, it never happened – that, surely, was more terrifying than mere torture and death. And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed – if all records told the same tale – then the lie passed into history and became truth. 'Who controls the past' ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.'"

"And what did she (Pamela Kilpadi) mean by citing this?!" the interrogator had reportedly asked a blindfolded Kian, facing the wall. "Who is George Orwell? And what exactly is this book – *1984* – about?"

It was not until much later that I read an editorial by Soros written back in 2007 entitled "From Karl Popper to Karl Rove – And Back", which begins:

In his novel *1984*, George Orwell chillingly described a totalitarian regime in which all communication is controlled by a Ministry of Truth and dissidents are persecuted by political police. The United States remains a democracy governed by a constitution and the rule of law, with pluralistic media, yet there are disturbing signs that the propaganda methods Orwell described have taken root here.

Indeed, techniques of deception have undergone enormous improvements since Orwell's time. Many of these techniques were developed in connection with the advertising and marketing of commercial products and services, and then adapted to politics. Their distinguishing feature is that they can be bought for money. More recently, cognitive science has helped to make the techniques of deception even more effective, giving rise to political professionals who concentrate only on "getting results."

These professionals take pride in their accomplishments, and may even enjoy the respect of an American public that admires success no matter how it is achieved. That fact casts doubt on Karl Popper's concept of open society, which is based on the recognition that, while perfect knowledge is unattainable, we can gain a better understanding of reality by engaging in critical thinking.

Popper failed to recognize that in democratic politics, gathering public support takes precedence over the pursuit of truth. In other areas, such as science and industry, the impulse to impose one's views on the world encounters the resistance of external reality. But in politics the electorate's perception of reality can be easily manipulated. As a result, political discourse, even in democratic societies, does not necessarily lead to a better understanding of reality.

He goes on to explain that this was a fatal flaw in the philosophy of Popper – his teacher and mentor in 1946 from Vienna at the London School of Economics, whose book *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945) served as the inspiration for his Open Society Foundations:

We must abandon Popper's tacit assumption that political discourse aims at a better understanding of reality and reintroduce it as an explicit requirement. The separation of powers, free speech and free elections alone cannot ensure open society; a strong commitment to the pursuit of truth is also required. The American public has proven remarkably susceptible to the manipulation of truth… **One influential technique – which Republican pollster Frank Luntz says that he learned from *1984* – simply reverses meanings and turns reality on its head. Another technique is transference: accusing opponents of having motives or using methods that characterise the accuser himself.** I believe that it is possible to inoculate the public against false arguments by arousing resentment against Orwellian Newspeak. What is needed is a concerted effort to identify the techniques of manipulation – and to name and shame those who use them.

I began to understand why dictators would treat Soros-affiliated 'velvet revolutionaries' as enemy number one. The foundations for 'great lies' have always crumbled under the weight of critical thought. **Dissent itself is the enemy, to be silenced at all costs.** Along with 'liberal philosophers', 'Jewish intellectuals and bankers', 'social capital theorists', 'civil society foreign agents' – the entire 'elite liberal bourgeois', in the manner of the Bolsheviks and Lenin-style politics of verbal and ideological warfare. The social theorist Charles Kurzman wrote a piece in *The New Yorker* in 2009 called "Reading Weber in Tehran" describing how during the show trial, all of social science, civil society, critical thought was effectively put on trial. Whether it is the Revolutionary Guards operating under orders from the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran along with their allies in Russian military intelligence or U.S. Republican political strategists studying Orwell's *1984* in their efforts to sway public opinion, they are building 'great lies' for public consumption. Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump (who became president shortly following the completion of this study) has been labeled the first U.S. 'post-fact' candidate, for whom facts are inconsequential when the only 'truth' that matters is public perception. The only 'truth' that matters is: 'Because I say so', because Trump is the boss. This was the modus operandi of Russia's Interior Ministry in 1993 and Iran's Revolutionary Guards in 2009 (and, indeed, the militaries of allied Russia and Iran currently engaged in Syria's war) – ***to maintain those in power at all costs***. The language of the mass show trial indictment contains numerous elements similar to the language of the radical right (and increasingly, left) in many countries. A full text of the indictment is available in appendices (my emphasis):

> The defeated and despondent enemy immediately went into action and set off a chain of chaos and riots in Tehran through the mobilization of its propagandist, political, and local agents. Our dear compatriots suffered many losses of life, property, and mental health as a result. According to documents which we have obtained and the confirmed confessions of the accused, the occurrence of these events was completely planned in advance and proceeded according to a timetable and the stages of a velvet coup in such a way that more than 100 of the 198 events were executed in accordance with the instructions of Gene Sharp for a velvet coup… A velvet coup is a kind of coup which has the same goals of a military coup but totally different in methods and means… ***The most important point which must be noted concerning a velvet coup is that the theoreticians bought by the West's spy and intelligence services have developed this method at the orders of their commanders*** to get World Arrogance out of its practical dead-end by overthrowing independent systems or systems which are not in alignment with the West's hegemony and lust for domination… Years ago, numerous foundations and institutions came into existence through the Western countries' spy agencies and other governmental institutions which, through a division of

organizational labor and concentration on various missions, were tasked with the joint purpose of implementing a velvet coup project. The most important of these institutions and foundations are the Soros Foundation (the Open Society Institute), the Rockefeller Institute, the Ford Foundation, the German Marshall Fund, Freedom House, the American Council on Foreign Relations, the German Council on Foreign Relations, and the Centre for Democracy Studies of Britain. [A captured US spy said]: Radio Free Europe, like many of the soft coup institutions, began its work during the Cold War and are connected with the CIA. During the Cold War, the Americans used politics, culture, and media and the cover of beautiful words like democracy and freedom and human rights to pressure the Soviets. Many of the institutions which are active at present in the field of soft coups are left over from that time… So far, the velvet coup project has been implemented in several countries and has generally been successful, from Georgia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Serbia, the Ukraine, and Kirgizstan. In most of these countries, the velvet coups came in the form of an election and have much in common with the project of the defeated velvet coup of Iran, whose final stage was set off under the excuse of the elections to the tenth term of the presidency… they prepare themselves before the elections so that if they lose, they begin to cast doubts upon the elections and announce that there had been fraud and bring the government's legitimacy under question and begin to hold strikes and, ultimately, have the elections nullified or have the elections held again under international supervision, in which their candidate will win…

Commenting on the indictment in 2009, the historian Evan Spiegel wrote that "it is quite clear that the author is putting on a front knowing full well that he understands that the precise opposite of what he is saying is true" and that "the idea that minuscule organizations like the Albert Einstein Institution and its pamphlets somehow bear responsibility for these events in Iran, as well as Serbia, Georgia, the Ukraine, etc., is utterly fantastic." Sadly, to this day, this 'utterly fantastic' conspiracy theory about western nongovernmental organisations orchestrating 'velvet coups' around the world on behalf of U.S. intelligence agencies is widely circulated and believed not only in countries such as Russia and Iran, but also among many in both radical right and left movements within the U.S. and Europe, despite statements denouncing the accusations from progressives such as Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn. International relations scholar Stephen Zunes reasserted his impassioned denunciation of the charges in a 2011 (updated from 2008) editorial (emphasis mine):

This [represents a] racist attitude that the peoples of non-Western societies are incapable of deciding on their own to resist illegitimate authority without some Western scholar telling them to do so… Why such bizarre attacks? One reason is that some critics…subscribe to the same realpolitik myth that sees local struggles and mass movements as simply manifestations of great power politics, just as the right once tried to portray the popular leftist uprisings in Central America and elsewhere simply as creations of the Soviet Union. Another factor is that many of the originators of the conspiracy theories…are Marxist-Leninists who have traditionally downplayed the power of nonviolence and insisted that meaningful political change can only come about through manipulation by powerful external actors or privileged elites. This is reinforced by the fact that **many supporters of U.S. imperialism – particularly the neo-conservatives – share this vanguard mentality with Marxist-Leninists.** As a result, the right has given the United States unjustifiable credit for many of the dramatic transitions from dictatorships to democracies

which have taken place around the world in recent decades. This, in turn, has led some on the left to see such ahistorical polemics as "proof" of the central U.S. role because the imperialists are "admitting it."

As a result of fears that they may be linked to the CIA and other U.S. government agencies, important campaigns for human rights, the environment, and economic justice have been denied access to tools that could have strengthened their impact. Furthermore, these disinformation campaigns have damaged the reputation of a number of prominent anti-imperialist activists and scholars who have worked with such groups by wrongly linking them to U.S. interventionism… **The widespread acceptance of these false charges against Gene Sharp and others raises concerns as to how many other fabricated pseudo-conspiracies are out there that distract progressive activists from challenging all-too-real abuses by the U.S. government and giant corporations.**

Groups that have embraced the conspiracy theory include the U.S. Tea Party 'grassroots movement', whose website 'Command Center' includes no fewer than 750 articles demonising Soros and the 'coup plotters' (with roughly 1,030 demonising Hillary Clinton and over 13,000 Obama). The movement was formed by conservatives "who possess a strong belief in the foundational Judeo-Christian values", stand against Obama's agenda, and have had a profound impact on the internal politics of the Republican Party, paving the way for Trump to become its presidential nominee. Indeed, recent revelations about Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. election reveal that not only Fox News and American radical right media, but even the FBI was duped by Russian disinformation maligning Russia's 'enemies' including Obama, Clinton and Soros – thereby aiding the rise of one of history's most deeply anti-democratic presidents (e.g. Demirjian and Barrett 2017, Parker 2017, Entous 2017).

Similar conspiracy theories have most recently been tied to the refugee crisis in Europe (which Orbán and other Hungarian authorities have blamed on Soros, see for example Newton 2015) and even Hungary's 1956 revolution against the Soviets on the recent occasion of the 60th anniversary this October. Russia's official television station – a mouthpiece of the Kremlin – described the revolution as a western-backed soft coup that released dangerous Nazi prisoners into the streets, prompting the Hungarian Foreign Ministry (not at the request of the Putin-allied prime minister but following pressure from opposition groups) to summon Russia's Ambassador (RFE/RL 2016). The Hungarian far right political party Jobbik, whose popular support surged among voters who lost much of their savings during the recent housing crash involving foreign currency-backed

mortgages, has even recommended inviting Iran's Revolutionary Guards to Hungary to serve as election monitors (Kirchik 2012, Juhasz 2015).

Not unlike the crime and corruption scandals surrounding Ahmadinejad at the time of the reportedly rigged election in 2009, news of Orbán's involvement in a multi-billion-dollar corruption scheme coincided (likely not coincidentally) with his widely condemned, racist 'National Consultation' campaign (Orbán 2015) to dehumanise and scapegoat war refugees. The Budapest-based Swedish far right ideologue and publisher Daniel Friberg, whose 'New Right' articles are often featured in Hungarian government-affiliated publications (e.g. Friberg 2016 'George Soros: The Enemy of Europe'), said at a well-attended lecture (Friberg in Őry 2016):

> [Metapolitics is] a war of social transformation, at the level of worldview, thought, and culture. The liberal Left made its 'long march through the institutions' based on the theories of the Italian Communist, Antonio Gramsci, as well as those of the Frankfurt School. They seized power in the media, cultural institutions, and educational systems, specifically those pillars of society which shape people's thoughts and opinions… **The Western Left gradually turned its back on the native European working class and took up the cause of various ethnic and sexual minorities as its mission.**

He advises the 'new right' to engage in metapolitics that bring the operations of parliaments to a standstill (much like the Tea Party), in order to prevent the agenda of the 'liberal Left' (Soros being one of its kingpins) from taking hold.

Although there may be direct cooperation between radical right groups in various countries, funding from the Kremlin helping in the formation of a kind of 'white supremacist internationale', perhaps even a sinister master plan devised by Putin to 'divide and conquer' the western world, simply by sharing common concerns in a digital age – concerns about the economic devastation wrought by neoliberal austerity or (in Friberg's 'new right' terms) the rise of "multiculturalism, support for unlimited immigration, feminism, gender theory, and support for sexual minorities" advocated by the "liberal elites and media", for example – processes of *authoritarian diffusion* can occur more rapidly than ever before. Various groups quickly adopt similar linguistic and political terms and policies to boost their acceptability and social capital within the political hierarchy. From the perspective of *norm spirals*, many societies around the

world appear to veering right with a potential for spinning out of control, particularly if the extreme injustices wrought by austerity policies do not soon find a corrective course.

Graffiti in Budapest, 2017 (photo by the author)

Chapter 6 DEFENDING DISSENT: FIELD STUDY FINDINGS

This study, which included a survey and semi-structured follow-up interviews, utilised purposive or criterion sampling (as opposed to quota sampling) to select a group of at least 15 advocates and educators working in over 10 countries and internationally who possess sustained experience and detailed information related to the practice of defending dissent over an extended period of time. Study participants have spoken out in defence of dissenters and the victims of state crimes in public fora including courts, commissions, parliaments, prominent publications, and universities in their attempts to uphold human rights such as freedom of expression (including dissent), speech, conscience (including religion), association, privacy, property, due process, and freedom from torture. Criteria for selection also depended on their status as stakeholders in a position to shape relevant policy or public opinion on issues of human rights and national security protection in their respective communities (i.e. 'stakeholder sampling'). Such selective identification of a relatively small sample can also be referred to as 'primary selection' or 'criterion sampling' (Robson 1995). I had initially planned for several potential participants to assist in the 'network' or 'snowball' sampling process of confirming additional participants (Gilbert 2001) based on the relevance of their experience speaking out on behalf of the victims of state crime to the theoretical goals of the study. This proved unnecessary, however, as more than enough potential participants were eager to contribute based on their trust in me as a researcher and former colleague. Thanks to that trust, although they were provided the option in consent forms, none of the study participants requested that their responses be anonymised. Detailed bios of participants are provided in an appendix.

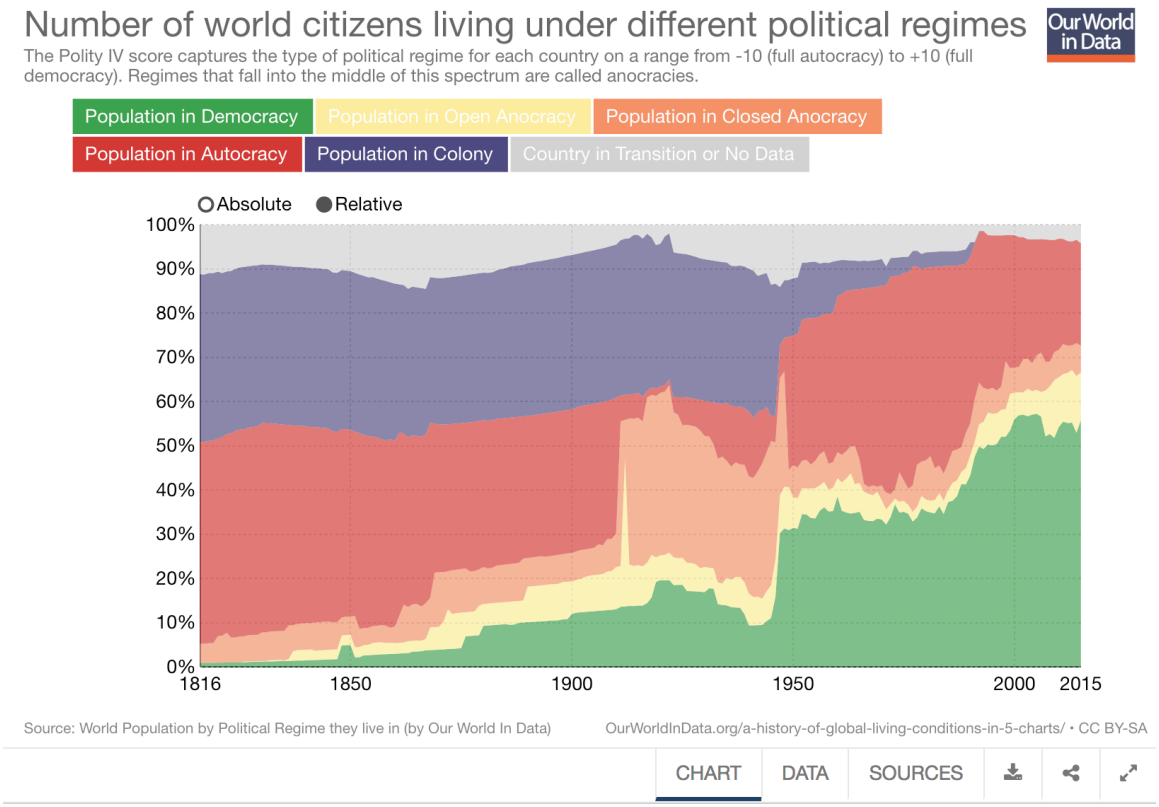
The aim of this mini *field* study is not an attempt to report facts of course, but to gauge perceptions among a small group of people working in diverse contexts with a large amount of practical experience and policy influence in defending dissent. The presentation of participant responses is organised as follows. Thematic analyses of data are presented according to the five major themes that emerged from the coding and analysis of study data. Given the context-specific nature of responses depending upon

geographical location, within each thematic analysis, participant responses are presented along the lines of three geographical categories: 1) countries in Central and Eastern Europe, 2) majority Muslim countries, and 3) global (respondents based in Europe, the U.K., and U.S.).

For each country, study data related to scapegoating or the creation of marginal categories of people or 'enemies' (*precariats*) by states within their own territorial boundaries as well as externally to bolster state power is included in a Wacquant triangle to provide a clearer sense of possible hierarchies. The categories of 'democratic', 'semi-democratic', 'autocratic', and 'dictatorial' *symbolic violence* are assigned to various states, depending on the reports about treatment of precariats and tolerance of the dissenters attempting to defend them. These categories do not relate to political or institutional arrangements, but rather the approach of the various governments to the treatment of their most vulnerable populations. They relate to Bourdieu's concept of state *symbolic violence* via the 'art of government' – akin to Foucault's (1991) notion of *governmentality* – with the state deciding how to structure social hierarchies, whom to punish, and how.

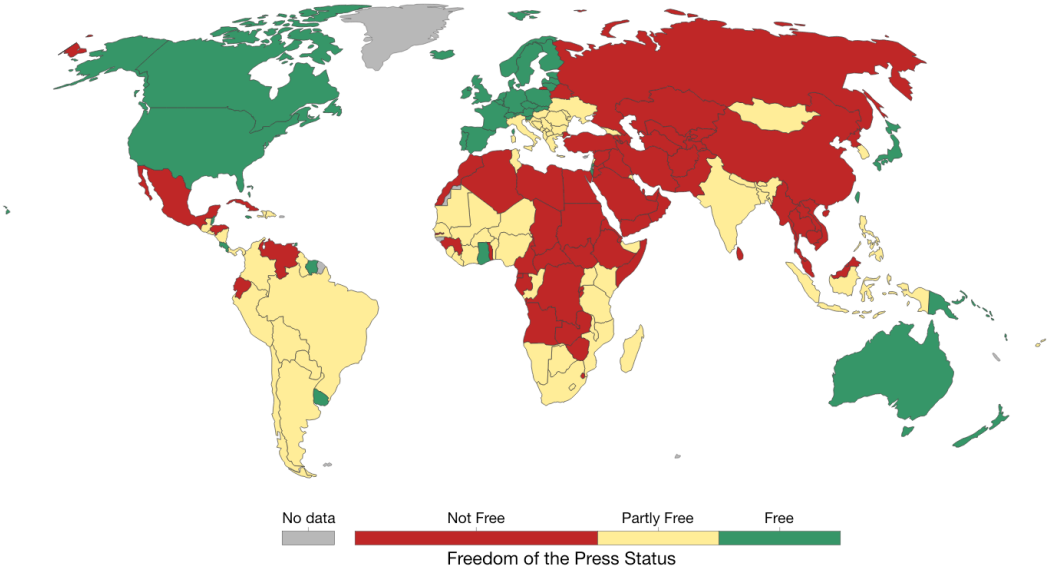
Although detailed country data concerning human rights protection, press freedoms, democratic governance etc. can be found in annual country reports of organisations such as the United Nations Human Development Report Office, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, Committee to Protect Journalists, Amnesty International, International Crisis Group etc., Oxford economist and media critic Max Roser has compiled some useful country and world reports using a specialised methodology addressing these issues for purposes of comparison (Roser 2017). Although data covering the past few years – which have seen a significant backsliding of political freedoms worldwide (e.g. Diamond 2016) – are not yet included, several tables below demonstrate that while respondents of surveys about global political freedoms tend to be pessimistic about the current state of affairs and prospects for the future, longer-term trends tend to present a far more optimistic picture. While it may not provide much consolation to today's victims of violent state abuses and other violations of fundamental freedoms, the ability to maintain

some perspective on the longer-term view can prove useful to the defenders of dissent and other fundamental rights.



World Map of the Freedom of the Press Status

The Freedom of the Press Status is measured by Freedom House. It measures the level of freedom and editorial independence enjoyed by the press.



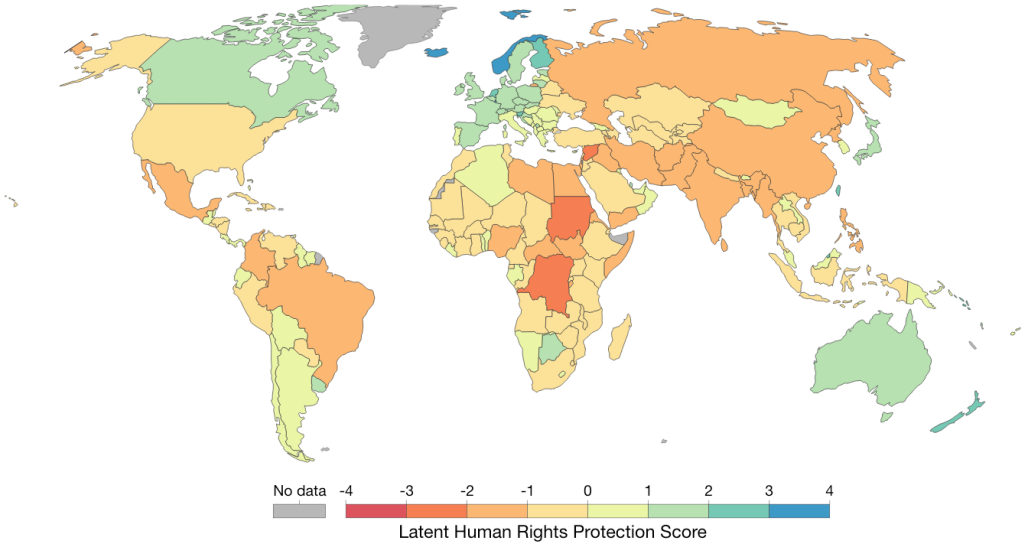
1979 2014

Source: Freedom House (Freedom of the Press Status) OurWorldInData.org/human-rights/ • CC BY-SA

MAP SOURCES

Human Rights Protection, 2014

Higher values indicate better human rights protection. The human rights scores measure protection from political repression and violations of "physical integrity rights".



1949 2014

Source: Human Rights Protection Scores – by Christopher Farris and Keith Schnakenberg OurWorldInData.org/human-rights/ • CC BY-SA

Note: The protection scores are latent variable estimates and are described in more detail in the Sources Tab. The original dataset is published with uncertainty estimates, which should be considered but cannot be shown here because of technical limitations.

CHART MAP DATA SOURCES

Thematic analysis of participant responses (themes, Part I)

Five prominent themes emerged from the coding of study data, as discussed below:

1) Attacks on dissent and other fundamental rights of vulnerable groups, including the 'ethnic nationalisation of human rights' (subthemes: *elite capture* and gendered *symbolic power*);
2) Russian disinformation;
3) Crisis of democratic legitimacy and the liberal democratic order;
4) *Ethical capital* and democratic authority
5) Expansion and contraction of spaces for the defence of dissent and other human rights, now and into the future.

Attacks on dissent and other fundamental rights of vulnerable groups, including 'the ethnic nationalisation of human rights'

A dominant theme to emerge from the study data is the threat posed by the rise in autocratic leaderships around the world and their growing inability and/or unwillingness to guarantee basic protections for the most vulnerable people among them, namely women, minorities (including sexual minorities), and migrants. Wacquant (e.g. 2010) refers to a process of 'racialisation' associated with neoliberal nationalism. Although racial conflict is undoubtedly a key issue in the study data, the phenomenon described by many respondents involves almost Nietzchean, Schmittean and/or traditionalist Heideggerean ideological struggles between rich versus poor, mainstream versus alternative, masculine 'Alpha male' versus feminine, 'strong' versus 'weak' as much if not more than between various racial groups. A definite pattern of gendered *symbolic power* emerges from the study data. Indeed, prominent scholars of European fascism including Timothy Snyder note the influence of such philosophers on the worldviews of the current Russian leadership and certain white nationalist and radical right political networks. Some of the main conservative billionaires bankrolling far right political

campaigns including Brexit and Trump, such as Robert Mercer, reportedly even espouse views of the poor as genetically inferior to the rich (e.g. Jane Mayer 2017).

In the study data, renowned international human rights scholar and political thinker Richard Falk describes one of the main policy outcomes of this radical right autocratic resurgence well, calling it **"the ethnic nationalisation of human rights"** encouraged by not only autocratic 'leaders' but also populist political movements such as Brexit and Trump. As pressures resulting from neoliberal *elite capture* and growing economic disparities are brought to bear on the middle classes, more political propaganda is generated by powerful elites to bolster the continued process of accumulation by dispossession by corrupt regimes, helping weaken support for the human rights of the most vulnerable members of society. At the same time, Falk says, such reactions "may indicate the presence of pre-revolutionary conditions that produce progressive challenges to the established order."

Thus, many respondents argue that increasing levels of economic inequality resulting from structural transformation to a more digitised economy and the *elite capture* of neoliberal nationalism has helped fuel neo-fascist and/or radical right political movements. This dynamic has led some prominent historians to draw parallels between conditions in some parts of Europe and the United States today with those of the Weimar Republic prior to the Second World War (e.g. Grass and Bourdieu 2002; Snyder 2017). Per the thesis keywords definition, ***elite capture*** refers to the takeover of public goods by elites (Mansuri 2004; Kilpadi 2010; Stiglitz 2015) via neoliberal processes of accumulation through dispossession (Harvey 2005, Peck 2010). Such capture is characterised by a sharp rise in the profits of an extremely rich, more globalised elite and a growing divide between rich and poor (despite gains made in eradicating absolute poverty) accompanied by the rise of more authoritarian, oligarchical powers less tolerant of dissent.

Respondents describe the impact of such developments on the defence of human rights and dissent in their particular country contexts. This thematic section presents some of the data included in the country Wacquant models.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the situation in Russia and Hungary appears particularly dire. "The Orbán government has openly decided to silence all organisations criticising its policies and activities," says human rights activist and opposition parliamentarian Timea Szabó. "I believe that Orbán uses national security interest and his fight against the EU as a weapon to shift attention away from the corruption cases of his government, poverty in the country and failure of our education and health care system… Over the past decade, legally we have had less and less of a chance to stand up for minorities or those whose rights have been violated." More specifically:

> In Hungary almost all civil liberties are severely violated, such as freedom of speech and assembly. Media and press freedom has been oppressed after amendments to the media law. Religious freedom has also been curbed by the latest Church law, which was heavily criticized even be the Venice Commission. The government has been collecting data on who participates in demonstrations and opposition gatherings. The national election is also no longer free and fair. There is fear among voters on being watched by government activists... The government has abolished most ways to seek remedy such as turning to the constitutional court or the ombudsman. It is pretty much the same for all civil organizations even though some of them, such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, are doing wonderful work.
>
> Attacks against Roma communities have been common in past decades, although the number has been decreasing… [T]he current government has openly attacked civil organizations supported by either the Soros Foundation or the Norwegian Fund. These politically motivated financial inspections continue to this day… Major human rights organizations such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, TASZ or the EKINT continue to defend human rights victims and so far there is little the government can do about it. [But] in the past two years major human rights violations have occurred against asylum seekers. The government's constant political campaign both against refugees and the EU have made an impact both on Hungarian citizens and European policies.
>
> [Primary targets for government scapegoating include] the homeless, refugees, Roma communities, LGBT people, civil organizations receiving funding from abroad such as the Soros Foundation or the Norwegian Fund, liberals, social democrats and, last but not least, women. Social democrats are communists, liberals are nihilists in the government's rhetoric.

Also in Hungary, media activist, author and professor Péter Bajomi-Lázár notes that he sees "neo-authoritarian trends gaining ground":

> I used to give interviews to radio stations and television channels as well as write opinion articles on media freedom issues relating to Hungary – this is, I believe, the way an activist should disseminate his or her ideas. As of this year, however, I gave this up, as – being a university professor employed by the Hungarian state which, in turn, has been captured by the Fidesz party – I am afraid I may lose my job.

[H]uman rights – including free speech – are universal in nature, at least theoretically speaking. The recent rise of neo-authoritarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, including in Hungary, in Poland and in Russia, and also in Turkey, is a sign that neither governments nor the majority of the population is devoted to this issue in this part of the world. It is [noteworthy that] some of the pro-government media in Hungary overtly rejects human rights and human rights activists.

The informal involvement of private security guards into political conflicts by the government is a new phenomenon in Hungary, which began about a year ago… Neo-authoritarian policies have earned many supporters among voters… Taken separately, both a mixed election system and supermajority laws can be democratic. But if the two are combined, one political party can change 'the rules of the game,' and no room is left for a government change and, by extension, a correction of the mistakes made… [Regarding recommendations for reforms], the Base Law (as they call the constitution today) should be abolished and a new one should be passed. In order for this to happen, however, the incumbent government should be removed (which is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future).

The homeless have often been targeted by some of the media, and badly affected by legislative measures. Most recently, migrants have become the number one target of government propaganda and action. The Soros Foundation has been funding a number of NGOs, including in the field of media freedom. Without this support, no human rights organisation could survive in Hungary. The Hungarian government is engaged in a permanent rhetorical warfare against various groups, including the liberal intelligentsia, refugees, and the European Union as a whole.

HUNGARY
autocratic symbolic violence

THE STATE (Orbán, Fidesz Party)
bureaucratic fields
(parliament, ministries, military, security agencies, ***media***, ***courts***, ***schools*** etc)
v
social space

BUDAPEST (other cities, towns)
v
habitus
(police, ***paramilitaries***)
CLASS (market) RACE (ethnicity)
v
PRECARIATS

('illegal migrants' (largely refugees fleeing war in majority Muslim countries), 'liberal intelligentsia', 'Soros spies', 'European liberals' or 'Eurofags' or 'rootless cosmopolitans', 'nihilists', NGOs, 'big international banks' (often with anti-Semitic connotations), communists, socialists, social democrats, liberals, women (feminists in particular), Muslims, Jews, Roma, LGBTs, migrants, refugees, foreigners, homeless, the poor, various minorities)

In Russia, author and policy analyst Ekaterina Sokirianskaia laments the fact that the country's government has become a "dictatorship" for which "Russia's national security interests = survival of the regime":

> The public space [for defending human rights in recent decades] has shrunk in Russia [thanks to] authoritarianism, terrorism, and the erosion of international institutions. A new body of laws restricts civic activity. Russia has become a dictatorship. The most common human rights violations in Russia are torture, enforced disappearance, fabricated trials, discrimination. State agencies and security services [are the most frequent violators]. This has changed from primarily federal agencies to primarily regional ones.
>
> Russia's national security interests = survival of the regime. [Authorities] directly equate human rights defenders and terrorists, accusing the former of being accomplices of the latter. [They are increasingly targeting] opposition [politicians], civil rights activists, liberals, LGBT, Ukrainians. [Officials] use trolls and bots to disseminate their message, distort information and hijack discussions. [Terms promoted by the regime include] Ukrop = Ukrainian, Wakh = Salafi Muslim, pindo = American (citizen of "fagland"), gayropa = Gay Europe.

RUSSIA
dictatorial symbolic violence

THE STATE (Putin, ***FSB, military***)
bureaucratic fields (***media***, ***courts***, ***schools***, parliament (Duma), ministries etc)
v
social space

MOSCOW (other cities, towns)
v
habitus
(***paramilitaries***, ***security services***, police)
CLASS (market) RACE (ethnicity)
v
PRECARIATS

(NGOs, 'Soros spies', opposition politicians and activists, 'pindos' (Americans, citizens of 'fagland'), 'Ukrops' (Ukrainians), 'Wakhs' (Salafi Muslims), 'Caucasus-faced' (dark-skinned persons from the Caucasus), 'blackface' (dark-skinned persons), Nazis (Ukrainians resisting the invasion, others opposing Russian policies are often labelled 'nazis' or CIA/'foreign agents', 'Gayropa' (gay Europe), 'European liberals' or 'Eurofags' or 'rootless cosmopolitans', 'illegal migrants' (largely refugees fleeing war in majority Muslim countries), 'liberal intelligentsia', 'nihilists', 'big international banks' (often with anti-Semitic connotations), civil rights activists, communists, socialists, women (feminists in particular), Muslims, Jews, Roma, LGBTs, foreigners, migrants, refugees, homeless, the poor, various minorities)

In Latvia, activist and policy analyst Maria Golubeva also stresses that "there should be more emphasis on preserving diversity, including diversity of opinion":

The most salient human rights issue in Latvia is LGBT rights. For me, the biggest challenge has always been to persuade the mainstream (in public policy) that also the rights of small groups of people in our society (e.g. LGBT, Roma, children with special education needs) are human rights, full stop. In Latvia, the presence in the government coalition of a radical right-wing party precludes steps to make public policy more responsive to the needs of minorities, migrants and refugees. In the EU, including Latvia, governments and parliaments sometimes attempt to limit human rights citing the threat of terror, or (in Eastern Europe) 'public morality'. [Latvia] defines national security interests in terms of preservation of independence, sovereignty and democracy. On the whole I agree, but there should be more emphasis on preserving diversity, including diversity of opinion…

The space [for defending civil liberties] has shrunk tremendously because human rights are no longer at the top of European agenda in foreign policy, as a result of the combined effect of financial and economic crisis of 2009 and the so-called migration crisis of 2015… With countries like Russia and Turkey (and China in Asia) openly choosing the line that a strong state is more important than individual rights, a 'race to the bottom' is taking place, where lowering standards of human rights protection is a new norm.

[Those who are bearing the brunt of this worsening human rights situation are]: Women…teachers who address gender issues…refugees…'illegal migrants'... Attacking migrants…and blaming them for threats of terror, has become commonplace scapegoating policy among politicians. This tendency has become much worse in recent years – with the migration crisis, Brexit, etc.

LATVIA
democratic symbolic violence

THE STATE (Kucinskis, parliament)
bureaucratic fields (ministries, military, security agencies etc)
v
social space (media, courts etc)

RIGA (other cities, towns)
v
habitus
(police, schools etc)
CLASS (market) RACE (ethnicity)
v
PRECARIATS

('illegal migrants' (largely refugees fleeing war in majority Muslim countries), women (feminists in particular), LGBTs, refugees, homeless, the poor, various minorities)

Journalist, writer and activist Miriam Molnár lists "the Roma, gays (LGBT in general), Muslims and refugees in general, Hungarians" among the victims of scapegoating by Slovak authorities, and says that she sees "a lot of progress that was achieved in the 1990s being reversed in the 2000s in Slovakia and Hungary":

The little multinational town where I grew up was mostly Hungarian, minority Slovak and Roma with a few Czechs. Thousands of Czechs and East Germans came to the spa in the summer on vacation. I knew from an early age that the Roma were looked down upon by all. Hungarians and Slovaks were in a constant war of words when it came to history and national achievements. I remember hearing about teachers in the Hungarian-language primary school telling their students that they don't have to learn Slovak (the official language of the state) and spreading hatred towards Slovaks. I'm sure the same thing was happening in Slovak schools towards Hungarians elsewhere in Slovakia…

Only the high party officials had rights and privileges under the old regime (1948-1989). Human rights were non-existent. My family listened to the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe daily. We watched Austrian TV and listened to Austrian radio and knew what was going on in the world. We also knew not to talk about any of this to anybody else, except people who we knew thought the same as we did. It was clear to me from an early age that the official propaganda was false, that news was mostly untrue and that to survive, we had to pretend.

SLOVAKIA
democratic symbolic violence

THE STATE (Fico, parliament)
bureaucratic fields (ministries, military, security agencies etc)
v
social space (media, courts etc)

BRATISLAVA (other cities, towns)
v
habitus
(police, schools etc)
CLASS (market) RACE (ethnicity)
v
PRECARIATS

('illegal migrants' (largely refugees fleeing war in majority Muslim countries), women (feminists in particular), LGBTs, refugees, homeless, the poor, Hungarians and other minorities)

Worker and migrant rights activist, educator and research fellow Natalija Vrecer in Slovenia points to job insecurity and economic inequality as a driving force weakening human rights protections:

Workers' rights are at stake in Slovenia and globally, because the role of trade unions is decreasing [while the power of corporations is increasing]. Some workers have such low salaries that they face difficulties to buy food and pay the rent. Many new jobs are temporary and not permanent and many people who work on a temporary contract are unwilling to fight for their rights, because they are afraid that their temporary contracts would not be prolonged. This fear is increased due to the scarcity of jobs in Slovenia, especially for intellectuals… Due to the loss of permanent residence [during the war], many people became unemployed, they lost pensions, health insurance, IDs etc. Although the situation of the so called 'erased' people started to be improved in recent years, there are still many whose problems have not been solved yet and the authorities are currently not inclined to pay all indemnities...

Hate speech is characteristic for some officials as for some other members of Slovene population. The word *čefur* was sometimes used by some Slovenes to mean a Bosnian and have a derogatory meaning, however, the meaning has changed in recent years and the word became popular and with a positive connotation. One of the reasons were educated and famous Bosnians who live in Slovenia who function as a role model. The major turning point in changing the meaning of the word *čefur* was the book of Goran Vojnović (a Slovene-Bosnian writer) entitled "Čefurji raus" (2008), in which he describes everyday life of young Bosnians living in Slovenia. After this book was published, the attitude of many Slovenes towards Bosnians changed and became more positive (I assume that includes officials in addition to the general public).

SLOVENIA
democratic symbolic violence

THE STATE (Serar, national assembly)
bureaucratic fields (ministries, military, security agencies etc)
v
social space (media, courts etc)

LUBLJIANA (other cities, towns)
v
habitus
(police, schools etc)
CLASS (market) RACE (ethnicity)
v
PRECARIATS

('illegal migrants' (largely refugees fleeing war in majority Muslim countries), 'erased people' without permanent residence after the Balkan wars, Bosnians, Roma, Hungarians and other minorities, LGBTs, temporary workers, women (feminists in particular), refugees, homeless, the poor)

Although geopolitical conflict and official abuses related to the 'war on terror' are more of a concern for respondents in majority Muslim countries, they face many of the same challenges as their European and American cohorts. "In Pakistan, certain laws which have long been criticized for being discriminatory against women and minorities need to be reformed," states Punjab Information Commissioner Mukhtar Ahmad Ali. "Even more importantly, Pakistan needs whole-scale criminal justice sector reforms to improve its police, prosecution and judicial service. As it is, the criminal justice system is inefficient, incompetent and can be manipulated by the powerful individuals or groups. It discriminates against certain groups and fails to win public trust." Journalist, professor and international humanitarian organisation consultant Syed Mohammad Ali says "I cannot speak for others, but [for me] the deteriorating security situation in my country and the increasing prevalence of violence to deal with criticism has made it increasingly risky to work on human rights issues and to try and highlight the concerns of those whose rights are being violated":

> The gaps between the elaborate and widely embraced rhetoric concerning protection of human rights and glaring and lingering deprivations found on the ground remains troubling and disconcerting. I see human rights violations as part of a larger hierarchical system of exploitation, where longstanding disparities between countries result in and sustain even more problematic disparities and deprivations within them…
>
> Within Pakistan, the religious right and the threat of being labeled blasphemous is a challenging threat, not only in terms of discriminating against the minorities, but also due to the inability of other more liberal groups to challenge the very rationale of the blasphemy laws... Ahmedia, Shias, Christian and Hindu minorities all seem to be victims of targeted killings, forced conversions, and accusations of blasphemy. The mob violence against minorities such as in Gojra a couple of years ago and again in more recent incidences is particularly troubling.

Author, journalist and Pakistan Human Rights Commission member Babar Ayaz also says that the country's legal system "must be revamped so that the cases can be decided quickly and the lawyers can defend people without any fear":

> Religious extremists and the security agencies have overriding powers over the democratic governments, however. Because of the infamous blasphemy law in the country, the government arrests the people who are allegedly blasphemers. The space provided to so-called imminent religious personalities/opinion makers who discriminate against minorities like the Ahmadis or defend laws like blasphemy on mainstream media remains a big problem in Pakistan.
>
> The most common human rights violations are against women and non-Muslim Pakistanis. In addition, Pakistan is major victim of terrorism and is at war against Islamic terrorist groups and Baloch separatists. In this war many human rights violations are reported by the people. Political activists are reported missing, and it is alleged that they have been picked up by the intelligence agencies... Sometimes the powers given

to the security agencies to combat terrorism have been misused against underprivileged sections of society. Broad use of antiterrorism laws in many cases is questionable.

PAKISTAN
semi-democratic symbolic violence
autocratic symbolic violence in conflict areas

THE STATE (Sharif, ***ISI***, ***military***)
bureaucratic fields (national assembly, ministries etc)
v
social space (media, courts etc)

ISLAMABAD (other cities, towns)
v
habitus
(***paramilitaries***, police, schools etc)
CLASS (market) RACE (ethnicity)
v
PRECARIATS

('blasphemers', women (feminists in particular), non-Muslim minorities (Ahmadis, Christians, Jews, Hindus etc), Shia minorities, LGBTs, 'westerners', 'liberals', civil society activists, peasants, the poor)

Author, scholar and former political prisoner Haleh Esfandiari also laments the weak legal system and lack of respect for human rights in Iran:

[I became interested in human rights issues] when I started working as a journalist in Iran almost five decades ago and noticed the lack of respect for freedom of the press, interference by the state through censorship. Newspapers were shut down, and there were cases of journalists being imprisoned. Later on as I started working on women's issues I found out that there was a fundamental problem with women's rights in Iran… [T]he lack of respect for human rights] stems from the paranoia of the regime. The regime feels it is threatened by western powers who plan to push for regime change through a soft revolution. No organization in Iran reaches out to foreign donors. They are worried they will be labeled as a foreign agent working for a foreign government. Social media has become another vehicle to control and go after the dissident and activist communities.

[The most common human rights violations in Iran include] unjust imprisonment, torture, solitary confinement, show trials, lack of recourse to an independent judiciary, no access to legal councils. The Bahaii and other minority groups continue to be targeted by the Iranian regime.

In autocratic countries like Iran there is not much room left for human rights lawyers. As an example I can site exiling Shirin Ebadi and closing her law office in Tehran. In recent years a number of human rights

lawyers have been imprisoned for defending human rights activists… Iran will [require huge] reforms in its existing laws, and the government needs to accept the rule of law and transparency. [A]dherence to and implementation of existing [human rights] conventions is the first step.

IRAN
dictatorial symbolic violence

THE STATE
(Supreme Leader Khamenei)
(***Revolutionary Guards, Islamic Revolutionary Court, prisons, military***)
v
(President Rouhani)
bureaucratic fields (***media***, ***courts***, ***schools***, national assembly, ministries etc)
v
social space

TEHRAN (other cities, towns)
v
habitus
(***paramilitaries***, ***security services***, police)
CLASS (market) RACE (ethnicity)
v
PRECARIATS

(human rights lawyers and activists, Bahaii and other religious minorities, NGOs, 'Soros spies', women (feminists in particular), 'The Great Satan' (USA), Americans, 'Gay Europe', 'western liberals', 'rootless cosmopolitans', 'liberal intelligentsia', 'big international banks' (often with anti-Semitic connotations), LGBTs, various minorities)

Author, professor and activist Nükhet Kardam, who teaches in both the US and her native Turkey, is disheartened by the country's recent authoritarian descent:

I know that women's human rights advocates in Turkey say that their ability to defend women's rights has decreased with the AK Party regime, especially recently and after the coup attempt. As Erdogan has become more dictatorial, human rights have shrunk to the bottom of the agenda… If you define national security as 'human security', then how can human rights protection not be part of national security?

I think they are using Armenian, for instance, as a derogatory term, accusing opponents as having Armenian background. The Gezi movement and their supporters on the streets were met with violence, but Erdogan supporters (civilians) were invited to go out on the streets.

I see more and more divisions, more people seeing the world through dualisms, black and white worldviews. I think that we as individuals and human beings must first become self-aware, present, and less attached to our greed, desires, etc. in order to communicate with each other without projections.

TURKEY
autocratic symbolic violence
(since the summer 2016 attempted coup, particularly in conflict areas)

THE STATE (Erdogan, AKP, ***security agencies, military***)
bureaucratic fields (***media***, ***courts***, parliament, ministries etc)
v
social space

ISTANBUL (other cities, towns)
v
habitus
(***paramilitaries***, police, schools etc)
CLASS (market) RACE (ethnicity)
v
PRECARIATS

(Gezi movement, Kurdish and other minorities (particularly Armenians), 'liberal intelligentsia', 'American spies', NGOs, women (feminists in particular), LGBTs, homeless, the poor)

U.K.-based professor, news service editor-in-chief and author Scott Lucas describes how the nature of basic struggles between those in power and their perceived opponents have not changed much over time, but their context and the preferred tools of oppression have:

It's a perpetual fact that those in power will try to close down that space [for defending civil liberties]. It's just a question of context in the 21st-century: while supposedly defending "freedom of space", stigmatizing and monitoring those who speak out; while supposedly defending "religious values", detaining those who don't fit your conception of religion; while proclaiming economic liberty, shutting down those who raise challenging issues of poverty and the right to a decent and secure life.

[Although British officials are not] targeting [them] as such…I would say that Muslims [in Britain] have come under greater scrutiny both through official channels as well as the "unofficial" [channels] of the media and British political culture. [I]n many countries, the trick in justifying suppression is to deny rights while supposedly respecting the group or individual whose rights are being challenged. Thus, a measure is not "anti-Muslim"; it is to provide "religious diversity" or "security". A measure is not "anti-immigrant"; it is to maintain "order" or "stability". [O]f course "terrorist" is always a good catch-all to justify repression. [And] I do think that the conflicts in the Middle East and Iran have given rise to political-religious labels such as "Takfiri" [unbeliever or blasphemer].

Iran from 2009 was a huge challenge for me because of the emotional toll of watching those in power crush hope. Syria from 2011 has magnified that many times because of the deaths and destruction – and the utter lack of justice and rights amid political violence, manipulation, and cowardice. I do think that Iraq 2003 and Syria from 2011, in different but linked ways, have wielded devastation not only on those countries but on the space for talking about rights and the need for intervention to protect rights. Rights should never be sacrificed in the name of security. Security should never be ignored in the consideration of rights… There has been a direct effect [of the 'war on terror'] on re-defining rights, for example, over "enhanced interrogation", rendition, and surveillance. But there has also been a less-notice, perverse effect. Whenever a country is challenged over its suppression of human rights, it can play "What About....?" and point at the US as a violator that should be the center of attention.

While recognizing that security must be considered, I believe the priority is inverted with respect to rights. In other words, the founding assumptions – say with the current bill over Internet surveillance – are based on the perceived security needs, with rights contingent on these, rather than on a set of fundamental rights in which security needs are to be evaluated.

Netherlands-based Czech-Canadian human rights documentary film-maker Petr Lom also takes a longer view:

We make films… We try to change the world through storytelling. In the belief that inspiration above all – from admirable and beautiful people suffering injustice – can shift centres of gravity somewhere…. The common theme is injustice. This has not changed, ever.

From my own experience – particularly working two years in Egypt 2011-2013, and most recently Burma 2013-2016 – the State [is the most frequent violator of human rights]. And particularly the military when it rules over the State. A better political science term: *mafiacracy*.

On one hand, Steven Pinker (2011) would have us believe that there is less violence in the world, a softer world. On the other hand, some argue now that there is increasing indifference and callousness in the world. I live in Europe, and I really worry about democracy here.

Professor and co-founder of the first university human rights study center J. Paul Martin laments a lack of leadership in furthering the human rights agenda and protecting vulnerable people:

[The most common human rights violations that I address in my work] are gender-based violations in the US and overseas. [In my experience, the most frequent human rights violators are] organized criminals and poorly trained government agents such as soldiers, police, corrections officers etc...

Legal spaces [for defending civil liberties both in the US and globally have grown over the past decade], but other advocacy spaces (education etc.) have generally failed to integrate human rights into their day-to-day processes. [International donor policies have impacted the space for defending human rights globally, but only according to] their own terms. [US authorities are increasingly scapegoating] prisoners… [The] real challenge is governments and government officials accepting their responsibility.

Falk, based in the US and Turkey, elaborates on the connection between economic inequality and the "ethnic nationalisation of human rights". Despite his work in the field

of international human rights law, he notes that education and political leadership tend to be more important than formal legislation in upholding human rights including dissent:

I suppose I have become less preoccupied with civil and political rights in recent years, and more interested in economic, social, and cultural rights, and especially in **the connections between the protection of human rights, growing economic inequality, and neoliberal globalization**… Corporations and states are the most frequent and dangerous violators [of human rights], abetted by different extremist groups that direct their venom toward vulnerable minorities.

Globally, I would [say that the most salient human rights challenges are the] protection of migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons; and economic inequality causing half of the world population to live near or below subsistence levels. In the US, I think these issues are also important, but also the societal consequences of economic inequality, and the resulting worsening material circumstances of 70% of the population in relation to health, education, housing, etc. The real impacts of economic inequality are being felt, and expressed through anti-establishment anger on the right and social democratic sentiments on the left (i.e. Trump, Sanders). Issues associated with Islamophobia have worsened the situation for the defense of certain human rights [in the US and Europe], and more generally in situations connected with alleged terrorism. I suppose 'radical Islam' and 'Islamic fascists' are the most common [derogatory] terms [used by authorities]. Also, the use of the term 'migrants' rather than 'refugees' or 'asylum seekers' is a way of underscoring the rightlessness of displaced peoples, although the rights of refugees and asylum seekers are themselves minimal. [T]he anti-abortion movement…has definitely had a regressive impact on women's reproductive rights. Also, evangelical religious institutions have disseminated hostile information... On the other hand, there seemed more awareness of police brutality, prison abuses, and racial injustices. The Black Lives Matter movement is an expression of a new anti-racist human rights advocacy, the first serious effort since the civil rights movement.

I think the pressures brought on the middle classes in the West as a result of growing economic disparities has weakened support for human rights, but it also **may indicate the presence of pre-revolutionary conditions that produce progressive challenges to the established order.** Because of the collapse of socialism after the fall of the Soviet Union, capitalism has not had to worry about any rival economic orientation, and the shift from Keynesian economics to neoliberalism has had a depressant effect on the protection of economic and social rights, as well as has the weakening of organized labor due to the increasingly digitized economy.

The most obvious examples [of powerful elites exploiting war on terror policies as a pretext for attacking political rivals and/or underprivileged members of society] involve Muslims who are targets by society and government. Even the recent attacks on women wearing religious clothing [in France and elsewhere] is illustrative. This pattern is also linked to anti-immigrant developments in many states that purport to uphold human rights. **There is a phenomenon taking place that might be described as 'the ethnic nationalization of human rights' encouraged by political movements like BREXIT and Trump.**

The [erosion of human rights protections] has worsened with the rise of what I call the popular autocrat, a leader elected on a platform that is dismissive of human rights and remains popular (Putin, Modi, Abe, Duterte, etc.). [The prevalence of violence perpetrated against civilians around the world] is also a characteristic of the way conflict is being conducted in the Middle East, and follows from the rise of autocratic government in many parts of the world.,,

The rise of the popular autocrat is definitely bad news for the human rights community, and this trend is not likely to change soon. Somewhat encouraging are spontaneous efforts around the world to help prisoners of conscience and vulnerable groups… Education is important, and a political leadership dedicated to upholding human rights. I think formal legislation has limited capability."

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
democratic symbolic violence
dictatorial (imperial) symbolic violence in conflicts abroad

THE STATE (Obama, Congress, ***National Security Council***, ***security agencies***)
bureaucratic fields (State Department, Pentagon/military etc)
v
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ***('ally' and 'enemy' states and corporations***)
v
social space (media, courts etc)

WASHINGTON, D.C.; NEW YORK CITY (other cities, towns)
v
habitus
(police, schools etc)
CLASS (market) RACE (ethnicity)
v
PRECARIATS

(Muslim and other minorities (particularly non-white minorities), 'illegal migrants' (includes refugees fleeing conflict), prisoners and persons with criminal records, LGBTs, 'enemy combatants', temporary workers, the homeless, the poor (especially women)

In addition to the subtheme of *elite capture* that emerges from data covering this larger theme, the issue of gendered *symbolic violence* arises frequently. Study participants' descriptions of those whom tend to be scapegoated and/or derided in language used by officials – particularly the use of homophobic rhetoric in Russia to describe the 'decadent West' – further reinforce studies on gendered symbolic violence by scholars such as Judith Butler, or in public policy language, by Carol Cohn. As a Harvard medical school researcher, she spent a year in 1984 studying the 'language' and norms of a group of nuclear strategists (Cohn 1987). She was struck by how, despite these defense intellectuals' claim to unemotional "objectivity born of technical expertise", their claim failed according to its own criteria, given that their discourse was in fact filled with "currents of homoerotic excitement, heterosexual domination, the drive toward competency and mastery, the pleasures of membership in an elite and privileged group,

the ultimate importance and meaning of membership in the priesthood, and the thrilling power of becoming Death, shatterer of worlds"[15].

Human struggles for power in the socio-political hierarchy and struggles for masculine sexual dominance appear to be closely intertwined. A study conducted by Bourdieu questioning why far fewer French men than women seemed to be willing to move to urban areas to rise up the social hierarchy, for example, found that many of the rural men expressed a distaste for the 'gay' speech and appearance of urban men – the implication being that moving to the city and becoming urbanised would diminish their masculinity and position within their social hierarchy (Grenfell 2008). "In many ways the performances of Donald Trump remind me of male chimpanzees and their dominance rituals," the anthropologist Jane Goodall noted in a recent article in *The Atlantic* (Fallows 2016). "In order to impress rivals, males seeking to rise in the dominance hierarchy perform spectacular displays: stamping, slapping the ground, dragging branches, throwing rocks. The more vigorous and imaginative the display, the faster the individual is likely to rise in the hierarchy, and the longer he is likely to maintain that position."

Like it or not, the bullies on the political playground who refuse to play by the rules are not going away any time soon. As quoted by Lucas above, "It's a perpetual fact that those in power will try to close down that space [for defending civil liberties]." And Lom: "We try to change the world through storytelling… The common theme is injustice. This has not changed, ever." The struggle is never over.

Russian disinformation

This is perhaps the most surprising theme to arise from the coding and analysis of study data given that (although included among preliminary thesis keywords) the issue of Russian disinformation campaigns was not specifically addressed during questioning. **The fact that the majority respondents in the U.S. and Europe mentioned Russian disinformation campaigns without having been prompted by the questions is telling.** This is an interesting result, especially in light of the fact that the study was conducted prior to the U.S. election of Donald Trump and the subsequent barrage of global headline news about the issue.

Per the definition in the list of keywords: The term ***disinformation war*** (not to be confused with misinformation, propaganda, or information war), likely derives from the Russian term '*dezinformacija*' and refers to "the dissemination of deliberately false information, especially when supplied by a government or its agent to a foreign power or to the media, with the intention of influencing the policies or opinions of those who receive it; false information so supplied" (OED 2016). European Union officials tend to use the term to refer specifically to Russian or Russian-style disinformation campaigns. In November 2015, a new European External Action Service communication unit launched a weekly 'Disinformation Review' that aims to expose and thwart Russian disinformation attacks.

Such tactics employed by Russia and allied officials in numerous countries have escalated significantly over the past decade, with a chilling effect on media freedom and dissent. As Bajomi-Lázár notes:

> Hungary had a free press before the 2010 legislative elections, while it has a partly free press to date, according to Freedom House and other media freedom watch organisations. All of the public service media and some of the private media have been turned into a means of pro-government propaganda. Controversial journalism practices such as black PR, advertorial and, possibly, blackmail have gained ground in recent years – black PR (or *kompromat*) [a Russian term meaning 'compromising material', or blackmail in English][16] can be especially harmful for the individuals targeted. Access to information is limited for citizens (e.g., on the second atomic power plant now under construction [with Russian aid] in the city of Paks). As there is no media freedom without information freedom, it is safe to say that media freedom is

largely missing in Hungary. As a consequence, citizens cannot make informed choices when casting their ballot. It follows that Hungary to date does not even meet the criteria for a minimal, or electoral, democracy… Just recently, a law amendment enabled the secret services to request online and mobile databases to release basically any personal data, including passwords. A recent *Index* article details how the secret services can observe basically everything one does in the online sphere.

Sokirianskaia says: "Russia has become a dictatorship… The biggest challenges [facing human rights activists are the fact that] human rights have ceased being a universal value, Russia largely rejects HR doctrine, and in many conflicts parties instrumentalize HR discourse without being authentically committed to it." Russian authorities "use trolls and bots to disseminate their message, to distort information and hijack discussions."

Golubeva in Latvia emphasises that authorities have made use of social media to spread propaganda that might be harmful to specific groups of people "in a number of countries. First in Russia – quite a lot." Molnár from Slovakia notes that "personal online attacks on human rights activists (women especially) are a huge negative [related to the rise of new media]. Russia famously spends millions if not billions on propaganda websites and TV/radio broadcasts that are spreading Kremlin propaganda [throughout] the ex-Soviet territory. To my surprise, they are highly successful. The fact that Larry King works for a Russian state-sponsored TV says a lot about the times we live in."

Lom "read about what the Russians are doing, and they are very good at it." Government agencies and non-governmental groups "are setting up networks and practices to try and justify abuses – or divert our attention from them or deny them," notes Lucas in the U.K. "Russia is just one example of a State which is developing systematic approaches to trying to redefine "what we think" – through their version of information and, quite often, disinformation – by working with numerous outlets who, wittingly or unwittingly, carry out the aim of obscuring the reality of abuses."

A large-scale study of anti-liberal discourse in Bulgarian media between 2013-16 conducted by Bulgarian academics, for example, revealed that Russian propaganda "co-opts western grassroots criticism of liberalism and globalization (and) recasts both left and right populism in nationalist terms." At the same time, local actors "borrow the

Russian propaganda package and use it for their populist purposes" (Iakimova and Vatsov 2017). Common talking points highlight independent media as 'enemies of the people', civic dissenters as 'paid protesters', courts as slow and politically biased, the nation 'first', NATO and other international organisations as 'obsolete'.[17]

Evidently, with the advent of *new media*, the propagation of disinformation by Russia is increasing in its "sophistication and volume", most famously evidenced recently by the hacking and disinformation attack against the U.S. Democratic National Committee in an attempt by Putin's government to influence the outcome of the U.S. election (MacFarquhar 2016; Demirjian and Barrett 2017; Entous 2017). Many such divide-and-conquer tactics – including the "less-noticed, perverse" 'whatabout' effect noted by Lucas of human rights violators redirecting attention to U.S. violations whenever challenged – harken back to Soviet-style 'information war' intelligence operations. Both the European Union and NATO established specialised offices in 2016 to identify and counter Russian disinformation (MacFarquhar 2016). Several well-researched reports by intelligence agencies and other accounts that have emerged since the U.S. election (e.g. Oates 2017, Parker 2017, Political Capital 2017) detailing such divide-and-conquer 'cyberwar' campaigns employing new media and fake news to cultivate far-right political opposition groups identify them as a primary threat to the national security of western democracies and the liberal democratic order underpinning them. Meanwhile, since the election of Trump, in addition to the continuation of military operations in Ukraine and Syria, Putin's government has moved to shut down Russia's most prominent human rights organisation Memorial (where interviewee Sokirianskaia once worked) as well as its leading humanities university – the European University of St. Petersburg – while encouraging the Orbán government in Hungary to use similar tactics to expel the best liberal arts university in the region (Central European University, my old employer). The move has fueled a showdown with the European Union, with some commentators noting that the battle is no less than a 'struggle for Europe's identity' and the future of free education (e.g. Coughlin 2017, Jan-Werner 2017). The crackdown on dissent, democratic society, freedom of thought, education, speech and other human rights continues.

Crisis of democratic legitimacy and the liberal democratic order

Declining U.S. moral authority has contributed to the third major theme that emerges from the study data – the crisis of legitimacy plaguing some western democracies. Undermined by ill-advised and murderous military interventions, a rapidly changing global economy, neoliberal nationalism and hyper-capitalist, oligarchical political corruption that places the importance of corporate profits over fundamental social values (not to mention Russian divide-and-conquer disinformation campaigns), some observers are describing the crisis as existential vis-a-vis the entire post-World War II liberal democratic order (Nye 2016). A majority of study participants also reflect on this crisis and the need for major institutional reforms, and offer possible solutions.

All respondents emphasise the apparent decline in commitment to liberal democratic values in western democracies – including the defence of dissent and other fundamental human rights – to be a major problem. Disillusioned and weakened by hyper-capitalist economics, disastrous military interventions, official attacks on international NGOs etc, many progressives and 'dissenters' defending precariat victims of 'the system' are on the defensive, facing varying degrees of moral and/or existential crises. It is telling when the co-founder of Columbia University's human rights programme – the first academic center in the world to be founded (in 1978) on an interdisciplinary commitment to the study of human rights – states that human rights advocacy has become "more of an industry than a social commitment". As with many sectors in an austerity-driven economy – from healthcare to education to politics – a quest for profit has often clouded the intended purpose. Younger generations feeling alienated from this kind of 'sell-out' leadership appear apathetic and less willing to participate in positive community-building activities than their predecessors. The reality in various contexts and locales may be different 'on the ground', but the perceptions – with the exception of a few relatively optimistic respondents – are largely negative.

Respondents in Central and Eastern Europe describe an anticlimactic post-Cold War environment that, despite having made significant gains in living standards in recent

decades, is characterised by political corruption, unfulfilled promises of freedom and prosperity and disappointment with the apparent inability of European Union political institutions to promote and protect the fundamental liberal democratic values espoused in European treaty agreements. In Hungary, Bajomi-Lázár says that "a renewed and stronger European Union, with extended legislative and executive powers, could be of help – but right now, the popular support needed for this to happen seems to be lacking. The rise of neo-authoritarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe challenges, by definition, human rights in the region." Szábo (an opposition parliamentarian) concurs, emphasizing that the "EU as an institution should stand up much more robustly in all member states to make sure human rights continue to be respected… [T]he answer to this crisis is not less Europe and more national security interest but more Europe and more common decisions made. Europe needs to become much more democratic, representatives of most of its institutions need be elected directly by EU citizens in a bid to regain trust… Laws are more or less are in place, implementation is the problem. As long as the government controls the police, the prosecutor's office and, more and more, the otherwise independent court, no laws can be good enough." Specifically:

> There should be a civil body independent from states set up with a mandate to oversee human rights practices and order appropriate interventions when necessary in order to avoid politically motivated vetoes and delays in such cases. Of course, among other things, the question is raised immediately about who would elect such a body.

Sokirianskaia also recommends the improvement of human rights protection "practices" in Russia apart from the mere signing of laws with no intent to implement them. Legal reforms that would improve protections include the liberalisation of "anti-extremism/anti-terrorism legislation" and laws banning non-governmental activities, and a repeal of the "foreign agent" law, which requires all NGO staff who receive foreign funding to register as 'foreign agents'. For Europe, she says, the European Court of Human Rights is best-positioned to defend the victims of arbitrary actions sanctioned by states. "International consensus can be found on the universality of the right to life, prohibition of torture, [and the right to a] fair trial."

Golubeva in Latvia also blames the relegation of human rights to the bottom of the European foreign policy agenda, along with recent economic and 'so-called migration crises', for weakened protection of fundamental rights. "With countries like Russia and Turkey (and China in Asia) openly choosing the line that a strong state is more important than individual rights, a 'race to the bottom' is taking place, where lowering standards of human rights protection is a new norm… Perhaps a revamped UN [may be best-positioned to defend the victims of arbitrary actions sanctioned by states]? But I do not have a proposal for how to mobilise political support for its reforms."

Molnár agrees that human rights protections and space for dissent have been negatively impacted by "uneven economic conditions and faulty EU practices" as well as domestic politics throughout the region "centered around xenophobia and anti-EU ideas". As regards international governing bodies that are well-positioned to defend the victims of arbitrary actions sanctioned by states, "I am not sure there are any," she says. "The UN is not working as Eleanor Roosevelt envisioned it. When there is no way to accept a resolution against Russia because Russia has veto power, how can anything be actually done?"

According to Vrecer's experience, government officials and employers "are the most frequent human rights violators" in Slovenia. The government passes laws "with no intention to implement them." A first step toward improving the situation would involve the implementation of human rights legislation that already exists. "The European Union and United Nations should monitor whether states which ratified conventions are really implementing them. They should also monitor more closely and prevent states [from ratifying] conventions and then deny the provisions [of human rights legislation] in national laws... It is also important that the international [human rights] bodies (e.g. the International Criminal Court in The Hague etc.) function on a long-term and not short-term basis."

"In Pakistan, certain laws which have long been criticized for being discriminatory against women and minorities need to be reformed," says Mukhtar Ahmad Ali:

Even more importantly, Pakistan needs whole-scale criminal justice sector reforms to improve its police, prosecution and judicial service. As it is, the criminal justice system is inefficient, incompetent and can be manipulated by the powerful individuals or groups. It discriminates against certain groups and fails to win public trust…

No international body is adequately trusted in Pakistan for its ability to protect the victims of arbitrary actions sanctioned by the State. International bodies such as the UN and EU have influence, but there have been very few instances where it could be successfully leveraged to protect victims. [Nevertheless], I think that there exists a broad agreement [on the meaning of human rights across cultures], as evident from the number of signatories to international conventions such as the UDHR [Universal Declaration of Human Rights] and the ICCPR [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights]. In Pakistan, we have a chapter on fundamental rights in the Constitution, which is largely consistent with the internationally acknowledged human rights. So, while there exists a broad agreement on principles, the finer details are likely to vary across cultures and it is understandable. In my view, the gap in practices across nations can be significantly bridged by investing in human rights education. A lot of criticism of the human rights regime is based on misunderstood nations.

Ayaz agrees that Pakistan's legal system "must be revamped, so that cases can be decided quickly and lawyers can defend people without any fear". Although he is generally optimistic because "the world is moving toward accepting twenty-first century democratic values", he "worries" that "religious extremism is becoming more assertive and dragging down the process of progress".

Esfandiari also stresses the need for not only major legal reforms, but basic adherence to and implementation of existing human rights conventions in Iran. Speaking of Turkey, Kardam doubts the possibility of forming international consensus on human rights protections:

I have grown cynical as I got older. I don't have much faith in international bodies [defending the victims of arbitrary actions by states], as long as powerful states don't take them seriously… [T]oday's world is filled with fear. As long as people are fearful and threatened, they are going to be on the attack mode. And as long as we don't have an agreement on moral principles, most importantly, trust, mutual reciprocity and sincerity, we won't be able to engage in dialogue, except in small pockets.

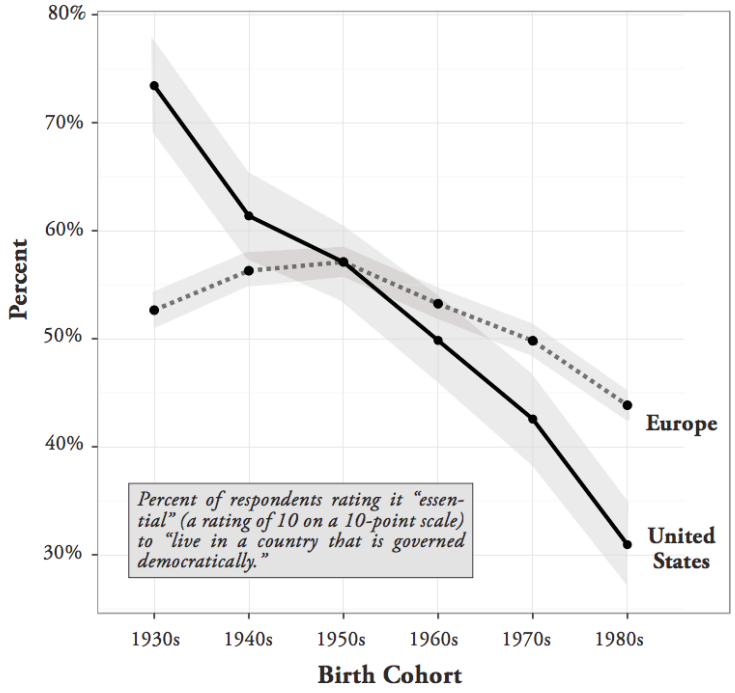
Lucas recommends that reforms to improve the protection of dissent and other human rights should begin "with a Bill of Rights in each country. Preferably, this would have a regional or international body, as with the European Court of Human Rights, for oversight. But since this is probably Utopian in many cases, one has to continue to rely on exposing the lack of such a framework or, in countries which claim this but do not uphold it (Iran comes to mind), the lack of fulfilment of those rights. I believe that the

right to life, shelter, education, health care, food, and freedom from persecution are universal rights, whatever the local interpretation of social or political systems... I do not believe that an international governing body can overturn [the imbalance of power within the UN]. So we have to work from the ground up to find ways of pursuing the defense of rights and local arrangements to ensure these."

"There seems to be an increasing corruption in the universal values that are supposed to underpin Europe, and especially the European Union", says Lom. "The reaction to the immigration crisis is a moral scandal in Europe. On one hand, Steven Pinker (2011) would have us believe that there is less violence in the world, a softer world. On the other hand, some argue now that there is increasing indifference and callousness in the world (see for example Foa and Mounk in the July 2016 issue of the *Journal of Democracy*)."

In this journal article, Foa and Mounk analyse data from Waves 3 through 6 of the World Values Surveys (1995–2014), tracking the following indicators for citizens: expressions of support for the system as a whole; degree to which they support key institutions of liberal democracy, such as civil rights; willingness to advance their political causes within the existing political system; and openness to authoritarian alternatives such as military rule. The results are alarming:

FIGURE 1—"ESSENTIAL" TO LIVE IN A COUNTRY THAT IS GOVERNED DEMOCRATICALLY, BY AGE COHORT (DECADE OF BIRTH)



Source: World Values Surveys, Waves 5 and 6 (2005–14). Data pooled from EU member states. Valid responses: United States, 3,398; European Union, 25,789. Bootstrap 95 percent confidence intervals are shown in gray.

Foa and Mounk: "What we find is deeply concerning. Citizens in a number of supposedly consolidated democracies in North America and Western Europe have not only grown more critical of their political leaders. Rather, they have also become more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system, less hopeful that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives. The crisis of democratic legitimacy extends across a much wider set of indicators than previously appreciated."

This 'crisis of democratic legitimacy' also impacts international bodies charged with the defence of fundamental rights. There appears to be growing ambivalence about their ability to represent citizens' interests and serve the public good. "The International Criminal Court in The Hague [is the best-positioned to defend the victims of arbitrary actions by states], I guess," says Lom. He believes in the power of education, film, art to help further human rights protection. "All [rights] in the Universal Declaration, and probably the other agreements nations sign – CEDAW, ICCPR [are universal]. I don't buy the relativist argument about human rights. But if you are really pressed, then boil it

down to Judith Shklar's argument that everyone wants to live free from cruelty, "the one thing we all know."

In the U.S., Martin laments some of the direction taken by the human rights movement in recent years, with the "institutionalization and professionalization" of human rights advocacy, placing NGOs "on top of the pile rather than at the bottom, at the delivery points. [Human rights advocacy] is now more of an industry than a social commitment". Systems of education have largely failed to integrate human rights into their curricula, while neoliberal international donor policies have impacted spaces for dissent and human rights only according to their own terms.

Falk, who has become more and more preoccupied with "the connections between the protection of human rights, growing economic inequality, and neoliberal globalization", also emphasises the importance of education and "political leadership dedicated to upholding human rights":

> I do think the UN Human Rights Council is the most effective body focused on human rights. Its budget limits what it can do, but if there was a more genuine interest in detaching human rights from geopolitics, the HRC could become a very effective institution. The HRC is also overly politicized, and could function better if allowed to be more independent. It is currently criticized from many angles, mostly unfairly. I know from my personal experience that it is the most effective international body that exposes the human rights abuses of Israel, and gets lots of flak as a result.

While there are international points of agreement on the protection of human rights surrounding the issue of torture, for example, "on public order issues and freedom of expression, there are clashes that cannot be presently resolved".

Ethical capital and democratic authority

Speaking of the importance of political leadership to the defence of dissent and other human rights, the theme of *ethical capital* was touched upon in the thesis case studies, but did not rise to the level of importance to warrant inclusion in the list of key terms until after coding and analysis of the study data. As mentioned earlier, *ethical capital* can be particularly powerful in the field of international relations – a force that even Bourdieu seemed to underestimate (Pellandini-Simányi 2014). To repeat: "Anyone who has seen experiments carried out on fairness and altruism with primates and children by Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology or by Frans de Waal of the Yerks National Primate Research Center in the U.S. have witnessed how, in general, human beings and some other primates seem to possess a surprisingly strong, innate sense of fairness, and that the sense of 'doing good' can serve as a powerful social reward and advantageous source of social capital in groups… I suspect that I was able to maintain the attention of senior interlocutors…not only because I was the official family representative, but because I was coming from a position of moral authority with *ethical capital*... This is an example of what the IR literature terms *social power* (in contrast to 'hard power') – the power to scale up norms and values to the global level (van Ham 2010, p8), and establish those norms as legitimate and desirable "without resorting to coercion or payment" (p80)… Particularly within the 'bureaucratic fields' of ethics, international law, international relations and diplomacy, displays of apparently ethical behaviour can lend moral authority, status, legitimacy within the bureaucratic hierarchy – a major source of *symbolic power*."

Ethical capital can be especially crucial to the authority of democratic institutions. In Pakistan, Syed Mohammad Ali laments a situation where "the 'war on terror' has created a lot more socio-cultural friction and an increasing gap of perception between liberals and social conservative elements, which also makes it more difficult to address human rights problems such as marginalisation or discrimination, since these issues are considered to be insidious attempts to impose a western agenda within the country." Esfandiari from Iran also emphasises how regime paranoia erodes the defence of human rights including

dissent: “Since I left prison in 2007, I have devoted a lot of my writings to political prisoners. In Iran there is a lack of respect for human rights and it stems from the paranoia of the regime.” Saddened by the deteriorating human rights situation in Turkey, Kardam asks, “If you define national security as ‘human security’, then how can human rights protection not be part of national security?”

Ethical capital is crucial for those attempting to challenge current developments such as the erosion of human rights protections, the increased targeting of civilians in conflicts, the rise of the popular autocrat dismissive of human rights, or the western shift noted by Martin towards human rights advocacy as “more of an industry than a social commitment”.

Szabó in Hungary notes that “Europe needs to become much more democratic, representatives of most of its institutions need to be elected directly by EU citizens in a bid to regain trust… Orbán doesn’t actually need to implement any drastic measures in the name of war on terror as long as he can make people believe that he is the protector of the country against all kinds of enemies” including “the EU itself”. Vrecer in Slovenia emphasises that refugees and economic migrants are “still not considered as social, economic and cultural capital by authorities” and should not be approached “as a national security issue and economic burden, but as an asset – not only for humanitarian reasons but also due to the fact that the Slovenian population is decreasing and refugees and migrants are needed in Slovenia as active workers (taxpayers)”. Books and other popular media have succeeded in humanising discriminated groups in Slovenia and elsewhere, and authorities need to follow that example and take a more positive view, leading with evidence and optimism rather than alarmism.

Many respondents point to renowned human rights political activists who managed to increase their moral authority and *ethical capital* amid unspeakable hardships as having inspired their work. In addition to local activists, relatives, friends and political thinkers, study participants based in Slovakia and Hungary mention Mahatma Gandhi and Martin

Luther King Jr. as key sources of inspiration for their work; participants in the U.S. and Slovenia also name Nelson Mandela. Vrecer in Slovenia explains:

> I became partially interested in human rights issues during adolescence, when I listened to Joan Baez in [Slovenia in] grammar school. Her songs of protest and the human rights movement that she joined made me interested in that field and invoked a spirit of protest against injustice in me… Besides Joan Baez, I have been most inspired by Vaclav Havel, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. It seemed amazing to me how they were able to transfer bad conditions into good opportunities, to them this was not a coincidence, but a skill they possessed and were able to employ it consciously. And as Joan Baez said about Vaclav Havel, they were all willing to take risks.

Expansion and contraction of spaces for the defence of dissent and other human rights, now and into the future

The fifth and final major theme to emerge from the study data deals with the ability of participants to carry out their advocacy work defending the victims of human rights violations – the expansion and contraction of spaces for dissent – as well as their opinions about future prospects in their countries. Participants' opinions about future prospects and their overall optimism or pessimism about where their societies are headed in terms of human rights protection are important, especially given that positive leadership is essential for such protection, and feelings of hopelessness can result in increased passivity when seeking constructive solutions.

Bajomi-Lázár and Szabó of Hungary both report being pessimistic about the future of human rights defence and the tolerance for dissent in their country. "I think that the voice of the liberal intelligentsia in Hungary, including mine, is less influential than it was ten or fifteen years ago," says Bajomi-Lázár. "A renewed and stronger European Union, with extended legislative and executive powers, could be of help – but right now, the popular support needed for this to happen seems to be lacking… I personally am rather **pessimistic** about the future, and do not see much room for action." Szabó agrees: "As long as the government controls the police, the prosecutor's office and, more and more, the otherwise independent court, no laws can be good enough… I am **pessimistic** [about the future], because due to domestic political reasons, the international community seems more and more reluctant to intervene in human rights crises. It is worrying to think about what will happen when climate refugees will flood Europe when the international community cannot even deal with the current Syrian crisis properly."

Sokirianskaia blames "authoritarianism, terrorism, and the erosion of international institutions" for Russia's shrinking space for the defence of dissent and other human rights, as well as civil society activity more generally. She is **not optimistic** about the future of human rights defence in Russia and non-western societies, or western attempts

at human rights protection abroad. She *is* **optimistic** about prospects "in the western world if applied to western societies", however.

Regarding the situation in Slovakia, Molnár also says she finds it "**hard to be super optimistic right now**". She acknowledges that the space for defending dissent and other human rights has both grown and shrunk at the same time, however. It has grown in recent decades thanks to support from international NGOs and European Union institutions, despite the fact that "faulty EU practices" have been damaging. "I have seen a lot of progress that was achieved in the 1990s being reversed in the 2000s in Slovakia and Hungary."

Vrecer reports being "**worried**" about the future of human rights defence in Slovenia, particularly given the low level of public awareness and the declining influence of trade unions vis-à-vis exploitative corporations. At the same time, "fortunately, civil society has become more active in recent years that it was a decade ago", she says. "Slovenian civil society was active in the eighties, in the nineties there was a backlash with mainly activists who dealt with refugees were very active, but in recent years, civil society became very active again."

In Central and Eastern Europe, only Golubeva in Latvia is "**moderately optimistic**" about the future of dissent and other human rights protections in parts of Europe, while being "**moderately pessimistic**" about prospects in regions beyond Europe. Nevetheless, she says that the space for defending dissent and other human rights has "shrunk tremendously" in Latvia due to the unwillingness of European officials to prioritise human rights in its foreign policy, along with recent economic downturns and the so-called migration crisis.

The attitudes of respondents in Pakistan are slightly more upbeat. According to Mukhtar Ahmad Ali, over the past decade there has definitely been "greater recognition of human rights issues among political parties and state institutions":

So, in general, the ability of human rights activists to discuss, highlight and seek redress of human rights concerns has improved. However, where the concerns relate to inter-state conflicts or war on terror internally, whether directly or indirectly, human rights activists face extreme difficulties and their voices are suppressed in the name of national security.

I am **optimistic**. Recently, we have enacted some good laws to protect women, children and minorities. At least two provinces have also enacted good RTI [Right to Information] laws. The democratic process, despite setbacks, has stayed the course; the media is relatively free; the social media offers a lot of space to freely discuss a wider range of issues; and it appears that the 'war on terror' within Pakistan has been largely won.

Ayaz also believes that, "despite rising religious extremism…the space for human rights has expanded with time" in Pakistan. He says that a healthier "balance" must be struck between "human rights and the laws which have been promulgated by various governments to counter terrorism. So long as religious extremism is kept in check, "I am **optimistic**", he says.

By contrast, Syed Mohammad Ali is **not optimistic** about the situation in Pakistan: "I cannot speak for others, but [for me] the deteriorating security situation in my country and the increasing prevalence of violence to deal with criticism has made it increasingly risky to work on human rights issues and to try and highlight the concerns of those whose rights are being violated."

Esfandiari says that "given the current conditions in a lot of developing countries I am **not hopeful** for the future prospects of human rights defence… In autocratic countries like Iran, there is not much room left for human rights lawyers." For example, Shirin Ebadi's renowned law office in Tehran was closed and she was exiled, she says. "In recent years a number of human rights lawyers have been imprisoned for defending human rights activists."

Kardam is also **not optimistic**, saying that in Turkey the space for defending fundamental rights "has definitely shrunk… As Erdogan has become more dictatorial, human rights have shrunk to the bottom of the agenda… I see more and more divisions, more people seeing the world through dualisms, black and white worldviews."

The pattern of the most common human rights violations addressed in Lucas's international work "hasn't changed much" over the past decade, he says – "those in power will often commit violations of rights to ensure that they retain power and avoid accountability… It is just the scope that is different. In a world where we can see more because of the pace and scope of information, we paradoxically often do more to avoid seeing – or if we see, acting… **I always maintain hope.** If I did not have that, I would not be able to maintain the quest."

Lom also strives not to be "a grumpy old man" and retain a relatively **optimistic** outlook: "We make films… We try to change the world through storytelling. In the belief that inspiration above all – from admirable and beautiful people suffering injustice – can shift centres of gravity somewhere…. The common theme is injustice. This has not changed, ever… Of course, I keep making human rights films. I do hope the world is becoming softer and gentler…and more civilized."

In the U.S., human rights professor Martin emphasises that the "real challenge" lies holding government officials accountable, pressuring them into accepting their responsibility. While legal space for human rights defence has opened up over the past decade in the U.S. and globally, "other advocacy spaces (education etc.) have generally failed to integrate human rights into their day-to-day processes." International donor policies have impacted the space for defending human rights globally, but only "on their own terms".

As is evident from the summaries above, the general outlook among study participants is alarmingly bleak. While most respondents acknowledged increased levels of awareness and commitment to human rights issues around the world in recent decades, it is difficult for most respondents to be optimistic when faced with the evident widespread decline in adherence to liberal democratic values and the rise of autocratic leaders in western democracies and elsewhere. For many, 'war on terror' policies have made their work and/or that of their students and colleagues much more difficult, and in some countries practically impossible.

Amidst the overwhelming pessimism, several respondents were optimistic about longer term prospects for increased tolerance of dissent and human rights protection, given the broad changes in popular consensus around these issues achieved over the course of the past few generations, not to mention advances in global communications. If we are to believe the likes of President Obama, historian Steven Pinker, economist Max Rosner, or public health expert and statistician Hans Rosling, we are currently living in the healthiest, most prosperous, least violent time in human history. We may despair when thinking about the apparent current epidemic of intolerance towards dissent and human right violations perpetrated against women and religious and ethnic minorities. If we look back at a seminal article by one of the founders of human rights law Louis Henkin published in 1989 entitled "The Universality of the Concept of Human Rights", however, we read:

> Virtually all societies are also culturally receptive to those basic rights and human needs included in the Universal Declaration that reflect common contemporary moral intuitions. Other rights, however – notably, freedom of expression, religious and ethnic equality, and the equality of women – continue to meet deep resistance.

Thematic analysis of participant responses (Part II, hypotheses):

Impact of *'war on terror'*

In this section, responses to questions 5-19 related to the 'war on terror' are tested against the initial research question and hypothesis. Research question: ***How has the space for the defence of dissent and other fundamental human rights been impacted by the 'war on terror'?***

Research hypotheses: *A majority of study participants perceive a reduction in their ability to protect the victims of state abuses – a shrinking 'space' for the rule of law and defence of dissent and other human rights over the past decade – at least in part due to the implementation of 'war on terror' policies and the exploitation of those policies by national authorities for political gain. Although this hypothesis may not sound surprising, the ways in which this trend has impacted the 'on the ground' defence of victims is revealing.*

The perception of less security = more extrajudicial violence (via secret courts, online media, black ops etc) = less liberty = more state crime = less security.

Given this inverse relationship between the liberty or 'freedom' of the (rent-seeking neoliberal) state versus the freedom of its constituents, ***state officials tend to implement policies that help to create marginal categories of people or 'enemies' to bolster the power of the state.***

Participant responses:

In Russia, Sokirianskaia explains that "most of the human rights violations I deal with are committed within the framework of the 'war on terror', (which) has been used to justify abuses and to marginalize and delegitimize human rights work. Powerful elites have exploited 'war on terror' policies as a pretext for attacking political rivals and/or

underprivileged members of society, especially in Chechnya". Mukhtar Ahmad Ali in Pakistan says that in general, "the 'war on terror' has increased the influence of the security establishment on government policies, not just in the areas of security but also in other sectors. It has undermined the democratic process, which could have evolved better if there was no 'war on terror'… ['War on terror' policies] have reduced operational space for NGOs/INGOs and media in certain areas (e.g. South Punjab, Balochistan, FATA, etc.), curtailed media freedom in relation to reporting on terrorism and military operations, and compromised the principle of due process in the context of military courts, etc. There have been allegations of excessive use of force against supporters of MQM in Karachi and Baloch nationalists in Balochistan. It has also been alleged that security agencies pick up individuals who may be suspected of sympathizing or supporting terrorists, and then keep them in unlawful custody for longer durations without courts' oversight". His compatriot Ayaz agrees: "Sometimes the powers given to the security agencies to combat terrorism have been misused against underprivileged sections of society. Broad use of antiterrorism laws in many cases is questionable. Religious extremists and the security agencies have overriding powers over the democratic governments." Responding from the U.K., Lucas notes:

> [O]f course "terrorist" is always a good catch-all to justify repression. Rights should never be sacrificed in the name of security. Security should never be ignored in the consideration of rights. The War on Terror framework/label/justification was invoked to rationalize, initially in the U.S., to rationalize a set of domestic and overseas systems and actions. This was used by the Bush Administration for an unprecedented – and unconstitutional – extension of Executive power. Other countries used this label for their expansion of executive authority… The War on Terror immediately became a vehicle for attacking individuals and groups as suspect or worse. This was used at the highest level of politics, for example, by Bush against Kerry in 2004, but at the widespread level of trying to stigmatize the activities or positions of groups… There has been a direct effect [of the War on Terror] on re-defining rights, for example, over "enhanced interrogation", rendition, and surveillance. But there has also been a less-notice, perverse effect. Whenever a country is challenged over its suppression of human rights, it can play "What About....?" and point at the U.S. as a violator that should be the center of attention. While recognizing that security must be considered, I believe the priority is inverted with respect to rights. In other words, the founding assumptions – say with the current bill over Internet surveillance – are based on the perceived security needs, with rights contingent on these, rather than on a set of fundamental rights in which security needs are to be evaluated.

Lom also views the current 'war on terror'-obsessed framing of the struggle between security and liberty as fundamentally flawed. He ardently believes that the idea that human rights protection and national security protection are conflicting challenges is "a

shitty argument. People forget that a state also has to have moral legitimacy – and this is based on respecting the principles it is based on – if you fuck that up, your state will start to die of corruption. That is a deeper understanding of "national security" – not just protecting yourself from external enemies… The 'war on terror' = colossal stupidity. George Orwell would have a party. The result: lack of respect for human rights. Easy openness to charges of hypocrisy. The pursuit of raw power under a new label. Above all, because of the way it has corrupted public debate and discourse there is even, for example, a public discussion of torture (see Mr. Trump) that is openly accepted as something "normal" rather than scandalous."

National security interests in the U.S. "are given an almost unconditional priority as the validation of torture during the Bush presidency", says Falk. "The entire world has become a battlefield for both sides, the terrorists attacks wherever they seem able, and with drones and special forces the West retaliates wherever a target is found… I think a more careful balancing of security against freedom concerns should be undertaken. It is difficult to assess as those that act against human rights claim that secret information justifies such action. At the same time, we know that the public demands that national security be upheld, and hold leaders accountable if they fail to do so. As the Arab saying goes: "The people prefer 100 years of tyranny to a single year of chaos."

Molnár also laments that, particularly immediately following the 9/11 terrorist attack, Slovak officials failed to get this balance right: "Powerful elites in Slovakia "exploited 'war on terror' policies as a pretext for attacking political rivals and/or underprivileged members of society". In Latvia, 'war on terror' policies "have made it more difficult to prevent officials from turning away Muslim asylum seekers and persuading "officials, especially from Ministry of Interior, that refugees should be perceived primarily as people in need of protection and not as threats to security." Although "it seems clear based on evidence made public by the media that terrorist attacks are committed by European citizens, right-wing and xenophobic governments such as the Orbán government are using these events for domestic political purposes, making a direct link between the two phenomena", says Szabó. "I believe that Orbán uses national security

interests and his fight against the EU as a weapon to shift attention away from the corruption cases of his government, poverty in the country and failure of our education and health care system… National security can and should be strengthened in a way that human rights of both asylum seekers and European citizens are respected." Bajomi-Lázár agrees: "I certainly agree that the 'Islamic State' must be halted, including with the use of military intervention. I do not think, however, that this would be a reason to invade people's private sphere… For the time being, 'terror threat' is just a phrase used in government propaganda…to justify intervention into people's privacy. It is also used for the purpose of rhetorically attacking the opposition parties."

Those working in Russia and Hungary appear to be under siege by state officials, working under much more difficult circumstances than those in Latvia, Slovakia or Slovenia, where civil society has remained relatively independent and active and continues to raise awareness about the importance of upholding human rights including freedom of speech. It is clear from the responses that the 'war on terror' – much like the 'war on crime' or poverty or drugs – is a characteristic policy response within a wider framework of neoliberal economics that has impoverished or at least demoralised large segments of the populations of each country included in the study, as theorised by Bourdieu and Wacquant. Respondents emphasised that the combination of the 'war on terror' along with a weak response on the part of the European Union and western countries to counter 'neo-authoritarian' tendencies in their region over the past decade has helped fuel a deterioration of official observance and popular tolerance for the defence of dissent and other human rights.

All respondents agreed that 'war on terror' policies have harmed protections for dissent and other fundamental human rights. However, several of those in Pakistan noted that the larger picture reveals positive change in the defence of dissent and other human rights (including freedom of speech) over time, considering the expanded knowledge and capacities of advocates working in the country when compared with a decade ago. This is likely the case for most of the countries included in the study to varying degrees – awareness about human rights issues has increased – the question is more about the

implementation of protection mechanisms. Unfortunately, since the recent coup attempt in Turkey, civil society 'dissenters' appear to be under siege by state officials in a way not unlike those working in Russia, Hungary and Iran.

Impact of 'new media'

In this section, responses related to *new media* (questions 10-11) are tested against the related research question and hypothesis. Research question: ***How has the space for the defence of dissent and other fundamental human rights been impacted by the rise of 'new media'?***

Research hypothesis: *A majority of study participants perceive an increase in their ability to protect victims online – an expanding 'space' for the protection of dissent and other human rights in the 'courts of public opinion' over the past decade – at least in part due to the rise of 'new media'. However, the more citizens are empowered by the use of new information technologies (for both good and evil), the more states are cracking down on media freedom and access.*

Participant responses:

All respondents note the importance of new media in allowing them to carry out advocacy and other work, especially internationally. Indeed, many would not be able to do the work that they do. Without social media, "we would not have been able to follow the violations of human rights" in Iran, Esfandiari says. "I couldn't do what I do without the changes in electronic and social media", echoes Lucas. Vrecer in Slovenia says that thanks to new media, "I started to advocate human rights in more states than my own, because I sign petitions concerning human rights abuses in different states regularly. I am also more aware of the problems around the world including those in my own country." She has not noticed instances of government officials using new media to target vulnerable groups. Former United Nations human rights rapporteur Falk credits new media with facilitating "transnational solidarity efforts, in particular. It has enabled support for victims of abuse anywhere in the world to be organized quickly and cheaply,

and often effectively. Also, it makes it easier to gather information on recent human rights concerns, almost in real time."

Punjab Information Commissioner Mukhtar Ahmad Ali says that new media has enabled access to information and resources from abroad, while enabling activists to "use social media to highlight issues which may not be picked up by the mainstream media." He is pleased that at least two provinces have also enacted good Right to Information laws. "The democratic process, despite setbacks, has stayed the course; the media is relatively free; and social media offers a lot of space to freely discuss a wider range of issues." Ayaz in Pakistan is also upbeat about new media, saying he views new media as having more positive than negative impact: "The information revolution in the post-Second World War period has globalised the world, which also means that human rights values are becoming common across the globe. Communication between people has become easier thanks to the latest technology, [which] is fully exploited by human rights activists in [disseminating] messages and collecting people for rallies." Syed Mohammad Ali agrees that the internet and new media has opened up previously unimaginable opportunities and access, enabling him "to conduct research relying on multiple sources, and to be able to write my weekly op-ed, for instance."

At the same time, however, he warns that "the space provided to so-called imminent religious personalities/opinion makers who [use social media to] discriminate against minorities like the Ahmadis or defend laws like blasphemy on mainstream media remains a big problem in Pakistan." Mukhtar Ahmad Ali in Pakistan does note that "there have been rumours that some security organizations use fake social media accounts to promote their agenda, but these are hard to verify."

In Hungary, both Bajomi-Lázár and Szabó note that the Hungarian government still relies mostly on legacy media (TV, radio, internet portals) to disseminate political messages. However, "all of the public service media and some of the private media have been turned into a means of pro-government propaganda," says Bajomi-Lázár. "Just recently, a law amendment enabled the secret services to request online and mobile databases to

release basically any personal data, including passwords. A recent *Index* article details how the secret services can observe basically everything one does in the online sphere."

Molnár also emphasises that "if any communication falls into the wrong hands, it can have grave consequences", particularly for LGBT activists in several countries in Africa, China, or Iran, for example. "Personal online attacks on human rights activists (women especially) are also a huge negative." Sokirianskaia confirms the extent of this problem in Russia, given how officials there "use trolls and bots to disseminate their message, to distort information and hijack discussions." Social media has become "another vehicle to control and go after dissident and activist communities" in Iran, Esfandiari says. Social media is a tool that is neutral in itself, and can be used for either good or bad ends. "I am sure you have heard how Erdogan made use of Facetime to mobilize his supporters to stop the coup attempt in July" in Turkey, Kardam points out. "That was pretty amazing. Some people thought that without that, Erdogan may not have prevailed."

"In Burma, of course, the propaganda against the Rohyinga and Muslims in general is quite atrocious, and social media is full of it," Lom says. Governments are becoming more well-versed in the use new media to "give credibility to allegations of anti-state behaviour to mobilize public opinion," says Falk. "Government agencies and non-governmental groups are setting up networks and practices to try and justify abuses – or divert our attention from them or deny them…trying to redefine "what we think" – through their version of information and, quite often, disinformation," warns Lucas.

Only participants from Hungary, Iran, Russia, and Turkey highlight the problem of state officials abusing new media to attack dissenters and vulnerable groups. This is an interesting result that further confirms a key difference in the leadership tactics of autocratic and dictatorial regimes versus democratic governments. It may also be noteworthy that all four of these countries are led by officials allied with Moscow, with societies impacted by Russian-supported disinformation campaigns. Participants' responses unquestionably bore out the original hypothesis: "A majority of study participants perceive an increase in their ability to protect victims online – an expanding

'space' for the protection of civil liberties in the 'courts of public opinion' over the past decade – at least in part due to the rise of 'new media'. However, the more citizens are empowered by the use of new information technologies (for both good and evil), the more states are cracking down on media freedom and access, and using new media platforms to monitor users and target dissenters. Or, to repeat President Obama's quote above: "It is precisely because citizens and civil society can be so powerful – their ability to harness technology and connect and mobilize at this moment so unprecedented – that more and more governments are doing everything in their power to silence them."

Chapter 7 CONCLUSION

This study investigates how the ways in which modern austerity-driven, digital age societies are structured can fuel discontent, rising popular support for authoritarian regimes and less tolerance of dissent in a wide range of country contexts. It applies recent theoretical work on social power in international relations and the work of Bourdieu and Wacquant on symbolic violence, poverty and social exclusion to the realm of elite geopolitics and (dis)information war. Several case studies are discussed from an ethnographic perspective. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with defenders of dissent and other human rights working in diverse national contexts to better illuminate the ways in which political 'leaders' create marginal categories of people to silence dissent and consolidate power.

Research contributions

This thesis offers four primary original contributions to existing scholarly literature. First, it seeks to contribute to the rapidly developing 'constructivist' international relations (IR) literature on social power in global politics (van Ham 2010), drawing on original field studies. Many contemporary IR scholars – particularly those inspired by Bourdieu's self-reflexive social theory – have heralded the promise held by the pragmatism espoused by the likes of John Dewey along with the recent 'practice turn' in constructivist IR studies to utilise detailed analyses of specific cases to better illuminate trends in rapidly evolving contemporary international relations policy and practice. Such research need not compete with but rather complement realist and other more dominant, often U.S.-centric notions of the primacy of 'hard power' vis-a-vis 'soft power' (Nye, 2004).

Second, the thesis attempts to position these multi-country analyses within a broader global context of the evolution of post-Cold War capitalism and the rise of more oligarchical forms of governance (Harvey 2007; Doogan 2009; Klein 2009; Bridge 2014; Peck 2010; Stiglitz 2003, 2015; Rodrik 2012, 2017) by situating them within a specific Bourdieusian framework of neoliberal nationalism, as elaborated recently by Loïc

Wacquant. It is not difficult to see how studies of local democracy or urban marginality by scholars such as Gary Bridge, Richard Sennett, Saskia Sassen, or Kian Tajbakhsh, for example, could be mapped within the framework of the Wacquant triangles to further illuminate relations within specific socio-political hierarchies.

Third, this thesis attempts to apply several specific social theory concepts, including Bourdieusian notions of *symbolic power* and *battle-concepts* (Jordheim and Neumann 2011), to case studies of 'defending dissent' in diverse national contexts for a better understanding of recent trends in contemporary international relations practices involving disinformation war in our increasingly networked digital age. To help contextualise complex events within a particular time, place, and perspective and offer a more reflexive analysis, several ethnographic field cases are presented.

Fourth, a semi-structured survey and follow-up interviews are conducted with 15 former colleagues who work both internationally and in countries including Hungary, Iran, Latvia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Slovakia, Slovenia, Russia, Turkey, U.K., and the U.S., all of whom are struggling to defend dissenters and victims of gross human rights violations in various ways. Five prominent themes emerge from the coding of study data: 1) Attacks on dissent and other fundamental rights of vulnerable groups, including the 'ethnic nationalisation of human rights' (subthemes: *elite capture* and gendered *symbolic power*); 2) Russian disinformation; 3) Crisis of democratic legitimacy and the liberal democratic order; 4) *Ethical capital* and democratic authority; 5) Expansion and contraction of spaces for the defence of dissent and other human rights, now and into the future.

Major concerns raised by study respondents include the following:

1) their societies' increasing inability and/or unwillingness to guarantee basic protections for the most vulnerable people among them, namely women, minorities, and migrants,

2) the current crisis of democratic legitimacy and the liberal democratic order jaded by the recent ravages of austerity-driven economics, 'liberal' military interventions, aggressive Russian disinformation campaigns, and the promotion in some circles of human rights as a business rather than a social commitment, and
3) apart from a few exceptions including two respondents in Pakistan, study participants expressed an overwhelming pessimism about the future of human rights protection given the current resurgence of autocratic governance throughout the world.

Study participant Richard Falk describes this autocratic resurgence as **"the ethnic nationalisation of human rights"** encouraged by not only autocratic 'leaders' but also populist political movements such as Brexit and Trump. "As pressures resulting from growing economic disparities are brought to bear on the middle classes, support for the human rights of the most vulnerable members of society weakens."

Future of the research

The aim of the mini field study within the larger thesis is to gauge perceptions among a small group of people with a relatively large amount of practical experience and policy influence in defending dissent. The transcripts from this small yet unique qualitative study are intended for public use by the study's participants, university colleagues and others engaged in related research in a wide variety of scholarly and practical disciplines. It is perhaps useful that the surveys/interviews were carried out just prior to the 2016 U.S. election in October 2016, for purposes of comparison with post-election data should they be revisited.

The study helps demonstrate the real challenges facing human rights defenders and 'dissenters' in a variety of countries, and the need for progressives to put aside their doubts and differences to join forces in reaffirming liberal democratic values in the face of growing threats. From the perspective of *norm spirals*, many societies around the world appear to veering right, with the potential of spinning out of control if the extreme injustices wrought by austerity policies do not soon find a corrective course.

A final note

Despite the alarming authoritarian turn described by the majority of study participants, several respondents noted the long-term gains made by those engaged in the defence of dissent and other fundamental human rights. The human rights movement has made incredible strides in recent decades, to the point where many states feel pressured to appear to be abiding by (even if not actually abiding by) human rights norms, which is a relatively 'new normal'. Such gains may help explain the recent backlash. To place such advances into perspective on a personal note, had I found myself as a journalist caught in a violent 'constitutional crisis' similar to the one I experienced in Moscow in 1993 several years earlier under a Soviet regime, I would have undoubtedly been gunned down in a flash. Had there been no 'new media' in 2008, President Obama would likely have never been elected. Had my Iranian-American friend been taken hostage several decades earlier, or even during the Bush Administration, or if the academic contacts that Obama appointed to the National Security Council had not been there to assist…chances are highly likely that he would have been executed, possibly helping ignite a war with Iran. The world today might be a much worse place.

Had my young son not developed a case of selective mutism as a 'third country national' in Hungary, I would not have been in the U.S. and in a position to also serve as a voice for my friend in prison. On the day that he was released from solitary confinement – the day that we knew there would be no execution and that the ordeal would eventually come to an end – my son suddenly began speaking out publicly for the first time in three years. "A mystical moment," Falk wrote in a personal message, "beloved of poets and all those blessed with faith in some form."

In the grand scheme of things, how could I not be optimistic?

As social beings inhabiting a shared and increasingly interconnected global reality, we can help represent those whose voices have been silenced, while refraining from representing those who can speak for themselves and allowing space for dissent – space for other narratives. Adequate space not only for self-determination, but *self-definition*.

We fail to advance into a truly postcolonial era unless we begin to view the act of claiming rights over the ideas or 'autonomous selves' of others – the *act of defining others* – as a fundamental basis of slavery (Kilpadi 2007, 2008). Such oppression may be characteristic of the rule of not only a dictator, but also a philosopher or democracy promoter claiming an exclusive right to set guidelines for the 'common man' about how to live, or a multinational corporation or researcher claiming copyright over someone else's ideas and the global public good of knowledge.

We live in a world in which one person's freedom fighter is another person's terrorist, where one person's conception of moral consistency may differ from another's. But when it comes to human social interaction, *difference* and diversity in language, perception, interpretation, character is the essence of the beauty of humanity, of the self-creating individual, of nature. It can be claimed that the multivocality of *dissent* – and the creation of conditions that allow qualitative inquiry and multivocality to flourish – is a fundamental basis, a fertile ground for our evolution and progress as individuals, and as societies.

ENDOTES

[1] Interview in 2004 with the U.S. National Public Radio about his book *Absolute Friends*, available at: http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=1643439&m=1643440

[2] John Naughton at an Institute of Arts and Ideas panel discussion entitled "The Open Society and Its Enemies", uploaded on October 3, 2016. Available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikqKUqeXA7c

[3] David Kaye, lecture at the Central European University, June 7, 2016 (attended by the author). Summary available online at https://www.ceu.edu/article/2016-06-10/special-rapporteur-kaye-urges-revival-global-commitment-freedom-expression

[4] Charles Tilly, "Predictions," Social Science Research Council, September 12, 2001. Available online at http://essays.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/tilly.htm

[5] Lynch, Colum, "U.N. Chief Blasts World Leaders in Farewell Address," Foreign Policy, September 20, 2016. Available online at http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/20/un-chief-blasts-world-leaders-in-farewell-address/

[6] Wacquant's complete description of his model: "I come now to the theoretical inspiration for my work… In order to disentangle the triangular connections between class restructuring, ethnoracial division and state-crafting in the era of triumphant neoliberalism, I have adapted several concepts developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1997) and put them to work on new fronts – marginality, ethnicity, penality – from the micro level of individual aspirations and interpersonal relationships in everyday life to the meso level of social strategies and urban constellations to the macrosociological level of state forms:

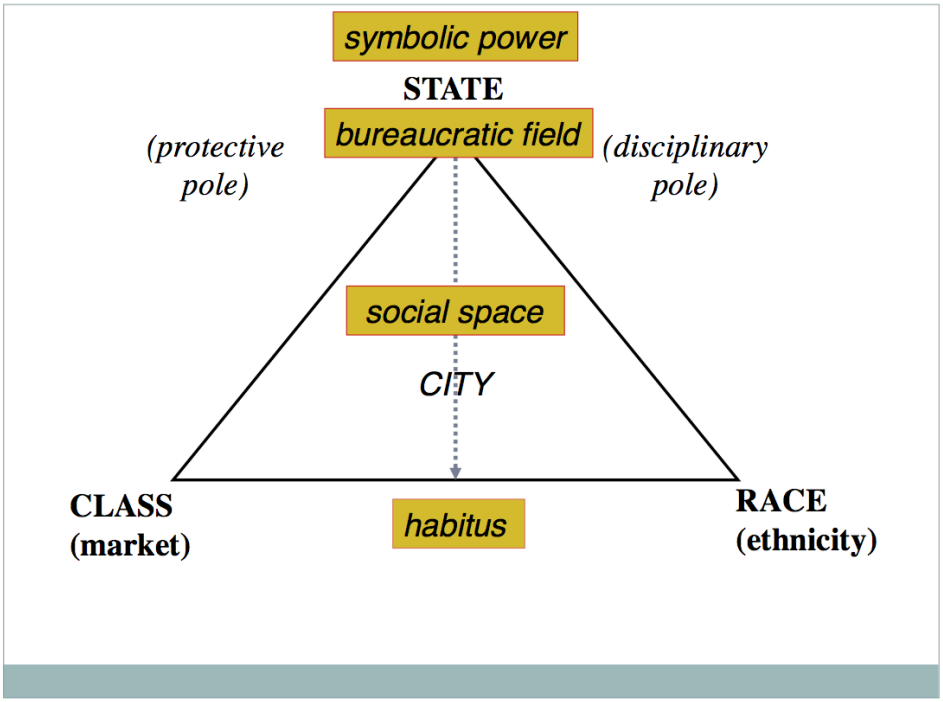


FIGURE 2 : THE UNDERLYING THEORETICAL ARCHITECTURE

-symbolic power is 'the power to constitute the given by enunciating it, to make people see and believe, to confirm or transform the vision of the world, and thereby action upon the world, and thus the world itself' (Bourdieu 1991: 170). It illuminates marginality as social liminality (translating alternately into civic invisibility or hypervisibility), penality as state abjection, and racialization as cognitively based violence. More broadly, it exposes how public policies contribute to producing urban reality through their activities of official classification and categorization;

-bureaucratic field refers to the concentration of physical force, economic capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital (entailing, in particular, the monopolization of judicial power) that 'constitutes the state as holder of a sort of meta-capital' enabling it to impact the architecture and functioning of the various 'fields' that make up a differentiated society (Bourdieu 1993: 52). It designates the web of administrative agencies that both collaborate to enforce official identities and compete to regulate social activities and enact public authority. Bureaucratic field puts the spotlight on the distribution (or not) of public goods and enables us to link together social policies and penal policies, to detect their relationships of functional substitution or of colonization, and thus to reconstruct their convergent evolution as the product of struggles about and within the state, pitting its protective (feminine) pole and its disciplinary (masculine) pole, over the definition and treatment of the 'social problems' of which neighborhoods of relegation are both the crucible and the point of fixation;

-social space is the multidimensional 'structure of juxtaposition of social positions', characterized by their 'mutual externality', relative distance (close or far), and rank ordering (above, below, between), arrayed along the two fundamental coordinates given by the overall volume of capital agents possess in its different forms and by the composition of their assets, that is, 'the relative weight' of 'the most efficient principles of differenciation' that are economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1994: 20-22). As 'the invisible reality', irreducible to observable interactions, that 'organizes the practices and representations of agents', social space helps us identify and map out the distribution of the efficient resources (Bourdieu 1994: 25) that determine life chances at different levels in the urban hierarchy, and then to probe correspondences – or, indeed, disjunctures – between the symbolic, social and physical structures of the city; and finally

-habitus, defined as the system of socially constituted 'schemata of perception, appreciation and action enabling us to effect the acts of practical knowledge' that guide us in the social world (Bourdieu 1997: 200), pushes us to reintroduce into the analysis the carnal experience of agents – and marginality, racialization, and incarceration are nothing if not bodily constraint, manifested most intensely intus et in cute. It helps us attend to 'the psychosomatic action, wielded often through emotion and suffering', through which people internalize social conditionings and social limits, such that the arbitrariness of institutions gets erased and their verdicts are accepted (Bourdieu 1997: 205). It invites us to trace empirically, rather than simply postulate, how social structures are retranslated into lived realities, as they become sedimented into socialized organisms in the form of dispositions towards action and expression. Such dispositions tend to validate and reproduce or, on the contrary, to challenge and transform, the institutions that produced them, depending on whether their conformation agrees with or diverges from the patterning of the institutions they encounter."

[7] Wacquant's full description of the transnational neoliberal project: "[We should] rethink neo-liberalism as a transnational political project, a veritable 'revolution from above' that cannot be reduced to the naked empire of the market (as both its opponents and its advocates would have it) but necessarily encompasses the institutional means required to bring this empire into being: namely, ***disciplinary social policy*** (encapsulated by the notion of workfare) and the diligent expansion of the penal system (which I christen prisonfare), without forgetting the trope of individual responsibility that acts as the cultural glue binding these three aforementioned components together… [T]he eruption of the penal state, and thus the great comeback of the prison (which had been declared moribund and destined to disappear in short order around 1975), is a response not to criminal insecurity but to the social insecurity spawned by the precarisation of wage labour and to the ethnic anxiety generated by the destabilization of established

hierarchies of honour (correlative of the collapse of the black ghetto in the United States and of the settlement of immigrant populations and advances in supranational integration in the European Union)… I conclude *Punishing the Poor* by contrasting ***my model of penalization as political technique for managing urban marginality*** with Michel Foucault's (1975) characterization of the 'disciplinary society', David Garland's (2001) thesis of the emergence of the 'culture of control', and the vision of neo-liberal policy propounded by David Harvey (2005). In doing so, I demonstrate that the expansion and glorification of the penal arm of the state (centred on the prison in the United States and led by the police in the European Union) [and state militia in a number of countries] is not an anomalous deviation from or a corruption of neo-liberalism but, on the contrary, one of its core constituent components… [This transnational neoliberal project] relies on the double regulation of the poor through disciplinary 'workfare' and neutralizing 'prisonfare', as ***'liberal-paternalist' since it applies the doctrine of laissez-faire et laissez-passer at the top of the class structure, toward the holders of economic and cultural capital, but turns out to be intrusive and supervisory at the bottom***, when it comes to curbing the social turbulences generated by the normalization of social insecurity and the deepening of inequalities. This contraption partakes of the erection of a Centaur state that presents a radically different profile at the two ends of the scale of classes and places, in violation of the democratic norm mandating that all citizens be treated in the same manner. Its ***rulers use the 'War on crime' (which is not one) [and 'War on terror'] as a bureaucratic theatre*** geared to reaffirming their authority and to staging the 'sovereignty' of the state at the very moment when this sovereignty is being breached by the unbridled mobility of capital and by juridical-economic integration into supranational political ensembles.

[8] See Darrell Ezell, "US "National Security": Obama to Break Link Between Islam and Terrorism?" EA WorldView, April 2010. Available online at http://enduringamerica.com/2010/04/16/us-national-security-obama-to-break-link-between-islam-and-terrorism/

[9] See for example professor Mark Juergensmeyer's interview by Sharon Schmickle, "From Cold War to cosmic war: Why is there so much religious violence?" MinnPost.com, April 7, 2008. Available online at http://www.minnpost.com/stories/2008/04/07/1410/from_cold_war_to_cosmic_war_why_is_there_so_much_religious_violence

[10] David Brooks, "Obama's Christian Realism," *The New York Times*, December 14, 2009. Available online at http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/15/opinion/15brooks.html See also David Gibson, "Of Neibuhr and Nobels: Divining Obama's Theology," Politics Daily, December 12, 2009. Available online at http://www.politicsdaily.com/2009/12/12/of-niebuhr-and-nobels-divining-obamas-theology/

[11] Stepan also emphasizes that the "lesson" from Western Europe…lies not in church-state separation but in the constant political construction and reconstruction of the "twin tolerations"… Discursive traditions as dissimilar as the Enlightenment, liberalism, French republicanism, and modernization theory argued, or assumed, that modernity and democracy required secularism. But, from the viewpoint of empirical democratic practice, the concept of secularism must be radically rethought" in terms of democratic versus nondemocratic secularism". (p222)

[12] Denzin is particularly frank in his belief that an increasingly critical, radical qualitative research agenda needs to be advocated in his review of the 2003 book *Key Themes in Qualitative Research: Continuities and Change* by Cardiff scholars Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey and Sara Delamont (available at http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst?docId=5008547718) which, according to Denzin, "seems in places like using the old to do the work of the new" in an almost uncritical way:

> My position can be briefly summarized. Qualitative research is not an innocent practice. The methods and practices of research are not technically neutral terms. The age of a value-free social science is over. Objectivism is dead. Our research practices are performative, pedagogical, and political. Through our writing and speaking we perform the worlds we study. These performances are pedagogical. They instruct our readers about this world and how we see it. The pedagogical is always moral and political; by enacting a way of seeing and being, it challenges, contests, or endorses the official, hegemonic

ways of seeing and representing the other. Critical pedagogy attempts to disrupt and deconstruct these cultural and methodological practices performatively in the name of a 'more just, democratic and equalitarian society' (Kincheloe & McLaren, in Handbook of Qualitative Research. 2000, p. 285). I want a new qualitative research tradition focused on the key themes, the key issues that come from this commitment. It is time to close the door on the Chicago School.

Progressive qualitative inquiry attempts to develop decolonialised approaches to research that heed traditionally marginalised voices, respect local knowledge, and investigate 'everyday life' in more bottom-up and 'inside out' ways, celebrating diversity and refusing to assume the authority, superiority, domination of the researcher vis-à-vis the 'subject'. Rather, the "line between text and context are blurred" (2005, p3). The researcher works in concert with the researched in new ways that promote ideas of knowledge sharing and creation rather than hoarding and extraction. This movement—hopefully including my own proposed doctoral dissertation project—involves a concerted effort that "redresses social injustices and imagines a radical democracy that is not yet a reality" (2005, preface; Weems, 2002, p3; Madison, 1998).

[13] Critical social theory (Miller in Given 2008, pp824-5):

…is usually distinguishable from traditional positivistic or postpositivistic perspectives in several ways: (a) it questions issues of power, (b) it is political in nature, (c) it centers the voices of those who have traditionally been silenced, and (d) it necessarily stimulates action… The destinies of all people, no matter how different in their current states, are seen as shared. In this light, a socially just society, one where all people have fair opportunities to thrive, is a complex tapestry of mutual economic, educational, and social interdependence.

[14] This is where my proposed study assumes an ontological position rooted in critical theory, pragmatism and 'action research' committed to social justice—rather than subscribing to a radical constructivist or cultural relativist position that humans live "in a world where there is no fixed consensus on the desirability of particular goals" (Seale 1999, p106; Hammersely 1995), I borrow from the field of international human rights law, subscribing to the notion that increasing levels of international solidarity towards particular goals aimed at alleviating unnecessary human suffering is indeed 'desirable'. Acknowledging the relative and complex nature of the 'postmodern' world in which we live and, particularly, the world of human relations we inhabit, should not prompt a confused rejection of the project of qualitative inquiry. Just the opposite—it should open up and herald in a new range of interpretive criteria for the evaluation of qualitative research while mandating that researchers strive to write from acutely self-aware, reflexive perspectives in the hope of obtaining optimal results in their attempts to convey important differences in meaning via their 'representations', however imperfect. Such a view goes some way in answering the primary question for progressive qualitative researchers today emerging from the "inescapable" crisis of representation and legitimation: "Is it possible to effect change in the world if society is always and only a text?" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, pp19-20). Online multimedia formats, for example, might serve to further the movement for progressive qualitative inquiry, contributing to further *multivocality*. The current positivist versus postpositivist battle yields an urgent "call to arms" for the qualitative researcher in the 21st century "to reengage the promise of qualitative research as a form of radical democratic practice (Peshkin, 1993)" that uses "the discourses of qualitative research to help create and imagine a free democratic society" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, preface).

As described by Seale (1999, pp105-6):

Authenticity, [Guba and Lincoln, 1989, 1994] say, is demonstrated if researchers can show that they have represented a range of different realities ("fairness"). Research should also help members develop "more sophisticated" understandings of the phenomenon being studied ("ontological authenticity"), be shown to have helped members appreciate the viewpoints of people other than themselves ("educative authenticity"), to have stimulated some form of action ("catalytic authenticity"), and to have empowered members to act ("tactical authenticity"). Of course the view that fairness, sophistication,

mutual understanding and empowerment are generally desirable is itself a value-laden position, which a Foucauldian deconstructionist might very well enjoy taking apart. …It represents an attempt to pull back from the relativist abyss, but the substitution of political goals as foundations for research is problematic in a world where there is no fixed consensus on the desirability of particular goals (Hammersley, 1995).

[15] Cohn (1987): "One of the most intriguing options opened by learning the language is that it suggests a basis upon which to challenge the legitimacy of the defense intellectuals' dominance of the discourse… Much of their claim to legitimacy is a claim to objectivity born of technical expertise and to the disciplined purging of the emotional valences that might threaten their objectivity. But if the surface of their discourse – its abstraction and technical jargon – appears at first to support these claims, a look just below the surface does not. There we find currents of homoerotic excitement, heterosexual domination, the drive toward competency and mastery, the pleasures of membership in an elite and privileged group, the ultimate importance and meaning of membership in the priesthood, and the thrilling power of becoming Death, shatterer of worlds. How is it possible to hold this up as a paragon of cool-headed objectivity? I do not wish here to discuss or judge the holding of "objectivity" as an epistemological goal. I would simply point out that, as defense intellectuals rest their claims to legitimacy on the untainted rationality of their discourse, their project fails according to its own criteria. Deconstructing strategic discourse's claims to rationality is, then, in and of itself, an important way to challenge its hegemony as the sole legitimate language for public debate about nuclear policy."

[16] Ioffe, Julia (2017). How State-Sponsored Blackmail Works In Russia, *The Atlantic*, 11January. Available at https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/kompromat-trump-dossier/512891/

[17] "The study was conducted in three phases: 1) Semantic analysis of the complete editions of 20 Bulgarian news websites and print media outlets; 2) Frequency analysis in the electronic archive of 3,080 Bulgarian-language websites, newspapers and blogs; 3) Content analysis of a sample of 3,305 publications in eight typologically different media outlets.

The semantic analysis and content analysis of 597 publications identified four simplistic and interrelated anti-liberal and anti-democratic theses:

- The US and NATO are a global hegemon/puppet-master which is pulling the strings both of Brussels and of national governments;
- Europe is dying because of its cultural decline ('liberasty') under the blows of the migrant invasion unleashed by the US, and because of the lame-duck, puppet European bureaucracy ('Eurocracy'). In the final analysis, Europe is dying because it is united: the EU is a construction which serves the interests of the US and of global corporations, and it is an enemy of the European peoples;
- Russia is rising. Although it is a victim of Western aggression, Russia is a guardian of its age-old sovereignty and of traditional values, and it is actually the true saviour of Europe;
- Bulgaria's liberal elites are venal: civic movements, human rights organizations, independent media outlets, pro-western politicians and parties are represented as an indistinguishable whole, and all of them are 'foreign agents' – puppets of foreign interests.

So far, there is nothing surprising – taking into account also some variations, these are the much-studied talking points of official Kremlin propaganda.

The connection between the above talking points is conspiratorial, and the conspiratorial grammar is simple: global hegemon (a role most often assigned to the US and NATO, or to George Soros) – puppets (all inconvenient institutional and personal actors) – victims ('the people'). On the international plane, the conspiratorial logic serves to discredit human rights, which are represented as a smokescreen for promoting 'hegemonic interests' (thereby eliminating any international pressure and control over the 'sovereign' agent conducting the propaganda in question). On the domestic plane, conspiratorial propaganda serves to silence every inconvenient speaker, who is represented as an 'agent of foreign interests' (thereby eliminating domestic pressure and control). Of course, the use of

conspiracy for propaganda is nothing new: condemning 'the enemies of the people' – on the domestic and international planes – is well-known from the time of Stalinism as an effective mechanism for consolidating totalitarian power and, in a softer version it is also effective in consolidating the authoritarian-oligarchic power of the present regime in the Kremlin. However, what are the origins and functions of this vocabulary of conspiracy in Bulgaria? After all, it is an EU member country with stable pro-European public attitudes in recent decades, and with democratic institutions that are, if not well-functioning, then at least not totally captured. When, and how, does the anti-liberal discursive front go on the offensive?

One of the important empirical findings of the semantic analysis was that each of the talking points of anti-liberal propaganda already has its specific vocabulary (idiolect) – a semantic cluster of labels and labelling phrases was identified for each of the talking points, through which the respective talking point is promoted. For example, the Eurosceptic cluster is represented by a list of 53 keywords and specific phrases, such as 'Gayrope' and 'European oligarchy'. The fourth cluster, designed to discredit Bulgarian civil society and domestic political opponents, is the richest – it contains 119 keywords and phrases, such as 'tolerasts', 'grant-spongers', 'liberal fascists', and 'Western lackeys'.

Precisely the existence of common talking points outlining a conspiratorial 'grammar' of articulation of the world, as well as of a specific 'vocabulary', allows us to speak of 'propaganda' and of 'propaganda language' in a narrower sense (taking into account the high level of coincidence of Bulgarian talking points and their vocabulary with those of official Russian propaganda)" (Iakimova and Vatsov 2017).

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APPENDICES

The Indictment

My apologies to my readers for my absence of two weeks. I have been translating material for the Greens and three lengthy articles by one of the leaders of the Greens. – Evan Siegel

Now for the subject at hand:

The Tehran Aide to the Deputy Revolutionary Attorney General: The Recent Events and Chaos Had Been Planned in Advance

Fars News Service: The Tehran

Deputy

Revolutionary Attorney General, in reading the text of the charges against the accused in the defeated project of a velvet coup d'état, announced: According to the documents available and the confirmed confessions of the accused, the recent events and the riots had been planned in advance and, according to the indictment presented by the Deputy Revolutionary

Attorney General on behalf of the Attorney General, they proceeded according to a timetable and the stages of a velvet coup.
According to Fars News Service's political correspondent, the text of the charges by Abdor-Reza Mojtaba, Tehran Aide the Revolutionary General Prosecutor representing the Attorney General is as follows:

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate
The text of the Tehran judiciary's charges against the defendants in the defeated project for a velvet coup:
"When We make mankind taste of some mercy after adversity has touched them Behold! they take to plotting against our Signs! Say: "Swifter to plan is Allah!" Verily Our messengers record all the plots that you make!" (Koran, Yunos 21)
Honorable President of the Tehran Islamic Revolutionary Court
Peace be on you.
As you have been apprised, the wise Leader of the revolution, with his Imam-like wisdom, stated that the aware nation of Islamic Iran has created an astonishing and unprecedented epic by their unusual presence at the ballot boxes during the elections for the tenth term of the presidency, which showed the Iranian nation's political maturity, revolutionary, powerful and civil capacity, and determined visage in a beautiful and glorious display before the eyes of the world.
Any fair-minded person could comfortably witness the great accomplishments of this huge epic in various political, cultural, social, and economic dimensions on the domestic and international level.
First, these elections have been transformed into a display of true democracy which inspires pride and it brought a message to the world that the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the safest and most stable countries for investment and advancing economic projects.
Second, in the realm of international relations, this vast national support increases the power of bargaining for and winning the legitimate rights of the sovereign people of Islamic Iran to a high level and has raised our country's success in the region and the world to silence [literally, to cut out the tongues of] those who make lying claims about freedom, democracy, and human rights. And so, these Iranian statesmen and masters of diplomacy can from now on, can perform their roles on the regional and world stage and in exchanges with the countries of the world with an increasing decisiveness and based on wisdom, splendor, and the nation's interests better than ever.
Third, the deep impact of this conscious presence on the way the people of the world, particularly its outstanding personalities, look at the Iranian people's rich culture and political feelings, which arise out of their Islamic and revolutionary beliefs, has more than ever drawn the attention of the nations' public opinion to the efficacy of the model of

religious democracy.
Fourth, since popular support is considered one of the most important ingredients of the national security of the sacred Islamic Republican system, the participation of 85% of the people [in the elections] has indubitably played an irreplaceable role in the stabilization of the foundations of national security, the government which appeared from this enthusiastic and passionate majority will be more powerful than in the past on the domestic, regional, and international scene, and this power will be as a vast national wealth in solving domestic and foreign problems and increasing and advancing our dear Islamic country more each day. The defeated and despondent enemy immediately went into action and set off a chain of chaos and riots in Tehran through the mobilization of its propagandist, political, and local agents. Our dear compatriots suffered many losses of life, property, and mental health as a result. According to documents which we have obtained and the confirmed confessions of the accused, the occurrence of these events was completely planned in advance and proceeded according to a timetable and the stages of a velvet coup in such a way that more than 100 of the 198 events were executed in accordance with the instructions of Gene Sharp for a velvet coup.
Honorable president of the court.
A velvet coup is a kind of coup which has the same goals of a military coup but totally different in methods and means.
In this connection, Mr. Robert Helvey, a retired CIA officer and a student of Dr. Gene Sharp, writes in his book titled *On Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: Thinking About the Fundamentals*, "Non-violent conflict [i.e., that same velvet coup—Mojtaba] does not have any special difference with military conflict except that the weapon used in it is different and unique to this technique." [not from the original]
Another of the differences between a velvet coup and a military coup is in the way it is formed from start to finish and its long duration, which can at times last a decade or more. The most important point which must be noted concerning a velvet coup is that the theoreticians bought by the West's spy and intelligence services have developed this method at the orders of their commanders to get World Arrogance out of its practical dead end by overthrowing independent systems or systems which are not in alignment with the West's hegemony and lust for domination. It is the result of years of research and fieldwork in various coup-prone countries. This technique of fomenting coups is so planned out that by employing so-called civil and long-term methods, it can stealthily and quietly complete the stages of the velvet revolution without attracting serious attention among the people or the political systems of the countries. By the time the political systems come to their senses, the velvet coup has usually reached its final stage and the probability of its success has greatly increased.
Years ago, numerous foundations and institutions came into existence through the Western

countries' spy agencies and other governmental institutions which, through a division of organizational labor and concentration on various missions, were tasked with the joint purpose of implementing a velvet coup project. The most important of these institutions and foundations are the Soros Foundation (the Open Society Institute), the Rockefeller Institute, the Ford Foundation, the German Marshall Fund, Freedom House, the American Council on Foreign Relations, the German Council on Foreign Relations, and the Centre for Democracy Studies of Britain.

In further elucidating this issue, it is necessary to point to the statements of a spy who is now in detention and who had returned to Iran with the aim of fulfilling a role in the elections for the tenth term of the presidency.

He says, "In the voyage I made to Israel, I became familiar with an institution called MEMRI which belongs to the United States, but is based in Israel and whose mission it is to monitor the Middle Eastern media. This institution's task is to struggle against anti-Israeli activities which are arising in other countries. It pursues a project whose goal is to support the reformists in the Islamic world, including Iran. The man in charge of this project is an old intelligence officer in the Israeli army whom I visited. In this meeting, he told me, 'Our task is to nourish and spread the ideas of thinkers like Abdol-Karim Sorush in Iran.'"

This spy continued, "Another of these active institutions is the Dutch agency Hivos [Thank you "Goseling" from Enduring America.], with whose officers I had meetings. This institution had good relations with institutions and NGOs inside Iran and even spent 10 million Euros towards the end of Khatami's presidency in Iran, most of which was given to the women's movement. Hivos got its budget from bribes from Dutch oil companies which wanted to evade paying taxes."

Concerning Radio Free Europe, the above-mentioned said, "Radio Free Europe, like many of the soft coup institutions, began its work during the Cold War and are connected with the CIA. During the Cold War, the Americans used politics, culture, and media and the cover of beautiful words like democracy and freedom and human rights to pressure the Soviets. Many of the institutions which are active at present in the field of soft coups are left over from that time, and Radio Free Europe is of this type. The Persian section of this radio is active under the name Radio Farda. This radio covers [uses the word "pushesh", a literal translation of an American idiom] many of the protests and vastly exaggerates them."

This spy continued, discussing another of the soft coup institutions called the Berkman [Center], saying, "Global Voices is under the purview of an institution called the Berkman Center in Harvard University. This project began in 2004 and I participated in its first meeting in Harvard. The goal of this project was to concentrate on all the bloggers of the world, especially the anti-American countries like Iran, to be able to achieve its purposes, i.e., to bring about a psychological war in these countries.

"The Soros Foundation, which contributes to most NGOs, provided financial backing for this

project. This project's manager is someone named Ethan Zuckerman. He is an American who had previously worked in the Soros Foundation. He has worked hard on using the internet for soft coups in various countries and also has ties with American security-intelligence institutes."

He continued, "The Berkman Center is managed by someone named John Palfrey, who himself claims that his uncle is Kermit Roosevelt, who organized the 28 Mordad Coup."

The above-mentioned added, referring to America's role in planning soft coups, "America uses various theoreticians to plan soft coups, such as Gene Sharp, who spent fifty years of his life in his foundation to plan how to make know governments' weak points for a soft coup. This foundation's website offers instructions in some twenty to thirty[1] of the living languages of the world in the methods of peaceful resistance. Of course, these languages are not German, French, or Spanish, but Burmese, Chinese, Arabic, Persian, etc., languages which the Americans would love the countries in to have soft revolution.[2]

"Other people, such as Mark Palmer, the president of the Konos Foundation,[3] have also done much research about Iran. Two or three years ago, he even organized classes and directly invited activists of the2 Khordad movement like Amad Baqi, and taught them the stages of a soft coup."

Honorable President of the Court.

So far, the velvet coup project has been implemented in several countries and has generally been successful, from Georgia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Serbia, the Ukraine, and Kirgizstan. In most of these countries, the velvet coups came in the form of an election and have much in common with the project of the defeated velvet coup of Iran, whose final stage was set off under the excuse of the elections to the tenth term of the presidency. Of course, this conspiracy was crushed thanks to the awake and ever-present people's alertness and our country's powerful security and policy institutions' decisive and timely treatment.

The arrested spy answered the question, "What model did America use for the velvet coup in Iran," by saying: "This model was based on elections and began at least two years before the elections were held. They first begin with a plan and choose a candidate for themselves. For example, Mr. [Mikheil] Saakashvili, the current president of Georgia, has without a doubt not simply emerged in the world of politics. Rather, he received money from Fulbright, which is associated with the American Foreign Ministry. He has studied for years in this country and was trained for these days. After determining the candidate they want, they pour vast sums of social capital on him. In this way, supporters of this candidate set about educating the people through a network, with the trademark Gold Quest, which is a standard way of recruiting to campaigns. After this stage, they choose a graphic and color for this candidate and begin to prepare public opinion to vote for him. On the other hand, they prepare themselves before the elections so that if they lose, they begin to cast doubts upon the elections and announce that there had been fraud and bring the government's legitimacy

under question and begin to hold strikes and, ultimately, have the elections nullified or have the elections held again under international supervision, in which their candidate will win."
The above-mentioned continued, "This has been done in Georgia, Serbia, Ukraine, and Croatia and succeeded. It is worth noting that the same educational texts which were used in Serbia have been translated into Persian and used in Iran with minor changes.[4] These matters depend on the society's culture, customs, and religion. The most important factor for executing this revolution is the youth, who are a good investment. They count on the youth's energy, since they are the only people who devote two or three months of their lives without money for the sake of elections."
He added, "Iran's velvet revolution is very similar to the Serbian velvet revolution. In that country, a student group called the Otpor [Resistance] began recruiting, which is very similar to the Green Wave in Iran. In the educational brochure which is posted on the Albert Einstein [Institution] site, under the title of "Difficult situation" which covers the issues of the greatest strategic importance that places governments in the position in which they cannot confront the protesters. It says that the protests must be put under the cover of religious customs and activities like street processions must be held which no government can restrain. Ultimately, this educational brochure points to several frames of an educational film about the Serbian revolution which is even dubbed in Persian and posted on the web site.[5]
There is another brochure about how to seize a city's sensitive locations and buildings. In it, it teaches protest groups how to take over important centers.
It is necessary here to indicate an important point in the court's presence. The educational film about the Serbian velvet coup which had been translated into Persian was edited and read by someone named Nader Seddiqi.[6] He is someone who first introduced Mr. Tajbakhsh to Messrs. Hajarian and Tajzadeh. Mr. Tajbakhsh said of Mr. Nader Seddiqi's role, "It is not clear to me what Mr. Nader Seddiqi's role was and who introduced me to him and at whose instructions he was responsible for having me meet with Messrs. Hajarian and Tajzadeh." At the present time, the afore-mentioned [Nader Seddiqi] is a fugitive.
This arrested spy, whose name we do not mention out of security considerations, believes that a soft coup or that same velvet coup has three arms: intellectual, media, and executive. He explains as follows: "Each of the velvet coup's arms are in contact with a number of American foundations and institutions, and indeed there has been a division of labor."
He said in this connection, "In the coup triangle (the intellectual, the media, and the executive arms) each American institution performs a special activity and cooperates with a group of people in Iran. The most important of them is an institution called the Hoover Institution which is under the supervision of Stanford University and was formed in the context of the Cold War.
This foundation has a project called Democracy in Iran on its agenda, which is under the supervision of three security elements named Abbas Milani, Larry Diamond, and Michael

McFaul.

Abbas Milani was arrested during the time of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi for activity in leftist groups. He then turned into an enthusiastic monarchist so that after living in Iran for a year or two after the revolution, he left the country for America where he wrote a number of books in which he praised the Pahlavi regime's accomplishments. He gradually turned into one of the opposition's leaders who was distinguished in this basic way from the rest: his relationship with domestic reformist elements.

This arrested spy added, "The Iran Democracy Project works on the Iranian people's popular culture, like music, blogs, and sexual issues.

"The student wing of this foundation is very active and people like Ms. [Fatemeh] Haghighatjoo, Arash Naraghi (from *Kian*'s [corrected by Ramin Jahanbegloo; thanks] clique and close to Sorush) make speeches in their conferences. Within Iran, too, people who are close to the Executives of Construction Party cooperate with this institute. For example,[Mohammad] Atrianfar, in every magazine or newspaper in which he works, interviews Abbas Milani under cover of his being a historian. Abbas Milani's importance for the CIA is greater than even Reza Pahlavi's, since he has good relations with the reformists; he even maintains all of Akbar Ganji's financial expenses outside the country."[7]

Footnotes

1 Actually, 40.

2 It includes the languages of a number of American allies–Azerbaijani (in the Latin-based alphabet favored in the Republic of Azerbaijan), Danish, Dutch, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Latvian, Norwegian, Polish, Spanish, and Swedish.

3 We have found no reference to such a foundation in any of his biographies.

4 This is the first I have heard about these pamphlets…

5 Since an article by the 9/11 "truther" Thierry Meyssan, the proprietor of Voltaire Net, appeared, more or less fringe figures in the cybersphere have followed Meyssan in attacking it. The Einstein Institution issued a (fairly tepid) statement by Dr. Sharp defending himself. A statementsigned by such progressive luminaries as Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky rejected the charges. For a list of some of the back and forth on this issue, see the Source Watch article on the Albert Einstein Institution. For a powerful and convincing rejoinder to the Institution's critics, see this piece in the Huffington Post.

6 Extrapolating from a brief biography presented about him in the pro-government Fars News Agency website, he used to be in charge of preparing government bulletins about the People's Mojahedin. He became disillusioned when Said Hajarian, one of the founders of the Ministry of Intelligence, was assassinated. He later gravitated, according to Fars News Agency, to Abol-Hasan Bani-Sadr.

7 I have no independent information about much of what is said in this article in general and

the last paragraph in particular. As for Prof. Milani financing Mr. Ganji, if the former has indeed فتوت جیب از داد پول, show some generosity, it only raises him a little in my estimation and does nothing to discredit Mr. Ganji, who I know for certain lives a meager darvish's existence.

Original text:
http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8805100074

Comments:
The most obvious problem with this whole indictment is its reliance on the mercurial blogger Hossein Derakhshan. His blog has not loaded for at least a month, although it has not been taken down. Those familiar with his blogging style, and Google searches still indicate that thecontent of the blog has much to do with the indictment's content. The reason for Derakhshan's arrest have always been unclear. He is now referred to as "the spy," although for whom he was supposed to have been spying–Israel or America, say–is left unclear. The most obvious difficulty with this material is, why a spy would have exerted so much effort to use a blog to blow the cover of his comrades. This in itself is enough to discredit the indictment.
The first three points in the introduction to the indictment are textbook examples of whistling past the graveyard. It is quite clear that the author is putting on a front knowing full well that he understands that the precise opposite of what he is saying is true.
The indictment states without a scintilla of proof that the demonstrations which erupted in the aftermath of the elections were foreign-inspired. Had the government wanted to restore order, all it had to do was follow its own constitution and have a transparent audit of the elections. The government instead chose to crush the peaceful and disciplined demonstrators with brute force, and therefore bears the full responsibility for the violence which followed.
The idea that minuscule organizations like the the Albert Einstein Institution and its pamphlets somehow bear responsibility for these events in Iran, as well as Serbia, Georgia, the Ukraine, etc., is uttlerly fantastic. The evidence in the indictment indicates the flimsiest of connections with the mass movement (someone who translated a pamphlet of theirs introduced some oppositionists to each other). It is, of course, true that the Americans did use mobilize and organize often elaborately-staged mass movements against its foes, but this was only possible because it had a well-entrenched network on the ground which could work more or less openly. This is just the opposite of what obtains in Iran. Moreover, it would be wrong to impute the overthrow of these governments to American efforts. The American game plan here was to organize and mobilize already-existing discontent which saturated the countries in question and put it behind candidates which it had groomed for

the leadership.

Along the same lines, it is well-known that American quasi-governmental institutions have given a home to Iranian emigres and “friends” of Iranian democracy. Aside from giving often bad advice, it is never made clear in the indictment how any of them had anything to do with the mass movement currently challenging the Iranian government.

As an aside, much fun has been made of calling the Hoover Institution “Hoofer”. This, along with the mistaken transliteration of Hivos as “Hifos”, is an Arabism; “v” in Latin script is commonly transliterated as a “fa”; an Iranian would transcribe it as a “waw”.

Tags: Abbas Milani, Ali Khamenehi, Ali Khamenei, Amad Baqi, Berkman Center, Centre for Democracy Studies, Einstein Institute, Elections,Fatemeh Haghighatjou, Freedom House, Gene Sharp, German Marshall Fund, Gloval Voices, Hajarian, Hivos, Iran, Iran Democracy Project, Larry Diamond, Mark Palmer, MEMRI, Michael McFaul, Robert Helvey,Rockefelloer Institution, Said Mortazavi, Soros Foundation, Tajaadeh,Tehran, Thierry Meyssan, Velvet Coup

Preliminary sample questionnaire:

- How did you become interested in human rights issues?

- Which thinkers, writers, activists have inspired you most?

- Can you describe a typical day in your work? What are some of the greatest difficulties that you face in your everyday activities? Greatest rewards?

- Does the work that you do differ from that of other human rights advocates in other parts of the world? If so, how? Does it differ from that of other advocates in Pakistan?

- What are among the most common human rights violations that you address in your work? In Pakistan today more generally? How has this changed over the past decade or so?

- In your experience, what do you see as the most salient challenges facing human rights activists today globally? In Pakistan?

- In your experience, which groups or agents are among the most frequent human rights violators? How has this changed over the past decade or so?

- Has your ability to defend victims of human rights abuses increased or decreased over the past decade? Can you explain? Do you believe the same can be said of other human rights advocates in Pakistan?

- Do you think the 'space' for defending civil liberties globally has grown or shrunken over the past decade? In Pakistan? What do you believe are the most important factors causing this? Can you explain?

- How has the use of the internet and social media impacted your work?

- How have authorities made use of social media to spread official propaganda that might be harmful to specific groups of people?

- Are there specific groups of people that authorities in Pakistan have begun to target or are targeting more over the past decade (i.e. migrants, the poor, 'blasphemers', specific minorities)?

- Are there any derogatory terms that have emerged over the past decade or been used more frequently by officials to describe specific groups or individuals?

- How have levels of violence perpetrated against civilians changed over the past decade? How has the prevalence of violence perpetrated against civilians impacted the space for defending victims of human rights violations?

- Do you view human rights protection and national security protection as conflicting or complementary challenges?

- How do you think the government of Pakistan currently defines its 'national security interests'? How would you like to see Pakistan's 'national security interests' defined?

- What does the phrase 'war on terror' mean to you? What policies, if any, do you associate with the 'war on terror'? Have these policies impacted your work defending human rights in Pakistan? Can you elaborate?

- Has the implementation of 'war on terror' policies over the past decade has had an impact on the space for defending human rights globally? In Pakistan? How so?

- Have powerful elites exploited 'war on terror' policies as a pretext for attacking political rivals and/or underprivileged members of society? Can you offer some examples? How has this dynamic changed over the past decade?

- How would you recommend reforming legislation to better protect citizens against human rights violations? Systems of legal practice?

- How might various actors, including religious groups, constructively engage in a reinterpretation of religious ideas and the relation between religion and democracy?

- Can global consensus be found in the meaning of 'social justice' and/or 'human security' across cultures, based on the protection of fundamental human rights? Which basic rights might be promoted as universal?

- Which international governing body or bodies, real or imagined, might be best-positioned to defend the victims of arbitrary actions sanctioned by states?

- Are you optimistic about the future of human rights defense more generally? What political, legal, social trends worry you most? What trends are you most encouraged by?

- Is there anything you would like to share with me that I haven't asked?

Extended summary of participant responses

Complete transcripts and consent forms are available from author via academia.edu

Central and Eastern Europe

HUNGARY

Péter Bajomi-Lázár ***("I see neo-authoritarian trends gaining ground…")***

Head of the Institute of Social Sciences and Associate Professor of Mass Communication at the Social Communication and Media Department of the Budapest Business School and editor of the Hungarian media studies quarterly Médiakutató. Senior Research Fellow between October 2009 and September 2013 with Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, a European Research Council project based at the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford. Recipient of the Hungarian Pulitzer Memorial Award in 2002 for his book on Hungary's "media war" (A magyarországi médiaháború, 2001).

In Hungary, as elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, it is most often government agencies, including the police and the secret services, that violate human rights. Human rights activists have not been exposed to physical assault (to my best knowledge), yet they do encounter existential threats, e.g., they may lose their jobs. Some of them…have been harassed by private security forces and the police. More recently, however, the Hungarian government has hired paramilitary troops (i.e., private security personnel) to do some of the dirty job. The informal involvement of private security guards into political conflicts by the government is a new phenomenon in Hungary, which began about a year ago.

Neo-authoritarian policies have earned many supporters among voters. The main reasons are, probably, historical, and include the Trianon Peace Treaty of 1920 (as a result of which Hungary lost many of its big cities with a great number of middle-class citizens who would likely not support an authoritarian party like Fidesz to date), the Holocaust of 1944 (exterminating in the Hungarian countryside 600,000 Jews, whose descendants would likely not support the current regime), as well as the 'soft-dictatorship' under János Kádár (1958-1988), as a result of which many people in Hungary have fairly good memories of authoritarianism (unlike, for example, those in East Germany or the Czech Republic).

Besides cultural factors, some institutional ones have also eased the consolidation of the power of the anti-system Fidesz party, and most particularly Hungary's unique combination of a mixed election system with a high number of supermajority laws. Taken separately, both a mixed election system and supermajority laws can be democratic. But if the two are combined, one political party can change 'the rules of the game,' and no room is left for a government change and, by extension, a correction of the mistakes made.

I think the government uses the 'national security argument' to increase its powers via legislative change. Currently, the only threat to this country's 'national security,' as I see it, is a growing Russian influence which, however, is a direct outcome of the policies of the incumbent government. For the time being, 'terror threat' is just a phrase used in government propaganda…to justify intervention into people's privacy. It is also used for the purpose of rhetorically attacking the opposition parties… I certainly agree that the 'Islamic State' must be halted, including with the use of military intervention. I do not think, however, that this would be a reason to invade people's private sphere.

I do see neo-authoritarian trends gaining ground across Central and Eastern Europe, including in Hungary. I think that the voice of the liberal intelligentsia in Hungary, including mine, is less influential than it was ten or fifteen years ago. In the first years of the now prevailing Orbán regime, the Budapest-based intelligentsia working in the humanities and the social sciences was a target, as indicated by a press campaign against the "liberal philosophers" accused of mismanagement of research funds (while the court later found no evidence of such mismanagement). The homeless have often been targeted by some of the media, and badly affected by legislative measures. Most recently, migrants have become the number one target of

government propaganda and action. The Soros Foundation has been funding a number of NGOs, including in the field of media freedom. Without this support, no human rights organisation could survive in Hungary. The Hungarian government is engaged in a permanent rhetorical warfare against various groups, including the liberal intelligentsia, refugees, and the European Union as a whole.

Timea Szabó ***("The Orbán government has openly decided to silence all organizations criticizing its policies and activities… [L]egally we have had less and less of a chance to stand up for minorities or those whose rights have been violated…")***

Humanitarian worker, journalist and elected opposition politician – one of the few female members of the Hungarian Parliament.

The greatest difficulty in Hungary is that while the current authoritarian Fidesz government continues to demolish democratic institutions and destroy human rights, there is very little that the democratic opposition can do peacefully. It is also very difficult to mobilize even those who are dissatisfied with the regime, so the means and tools for politicians and human rights activists are very limited. In my experience…in other countries it is natural for civil organizations to lobby with politicians for issues important to them. In Hungary, civil organizations tend to over-emphasize their sovereignty from all political organizations and are very reluctant to cooperate with parties on any human rights or other issues, fearing from being stigmatized as belonging to a political party. Instead of the organizations lobbying at parties for certain issues, it is parties that seek out NGOs for their opinion if a proposal is submitted to parliament. Globalization and global political interest make it even more difficult to effectively fight for human rights issues. Civil organizations need to create more effective international networks and cross-border cooperation.

In Hungary almost all civil liberties are severely violated, such as freedom of speech and assembly. Media and press freedom has been oppressed after amendments to the media law. Religious freedom has also been curbed by the latest Church law, which was heavily criticized even be the Venice Commission. The government has been collecting data on who participates in demonstrations and opposition gatherings. The national election is also no longer free and fair. There is fear among voters on being watched by government activists. [Over the past decade], legally we have less and less of a chance to stand up for minorities or those whose rights have been violated. The government has abolished most ways to seek remedy such as turning to the constitutional court or the ombudsman. It is pretty much the same for all civil organizations even though some of them, such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, are doing wonderful work.

[Primary targets for government scapegoating include] the homeless, refugees, Roma communities, LGBT people, civil organizations receiving funding from abroad such as the Soros Foundation or the Norwegian Fund, liberals, social democrats and, last but not least, women. Social democrats are communists, liberals are nihilists in the government's rhetoric…

Attacks against Roma communities have been common in the past decades, although the number has been decreasing. During the previous government there was an infamous attack against [Roma] civilians by the police throughout the 2006 series of demonstrations. Ferenc Gyurcsany, the previous PM practically lost because of those atrocities. Since then such open violence during public demonstrations have not occurred. [T]he current government has openly attacked civil organizations supported by either the Soros Foundation or the Norwegian Fund. These politically motivated financial inspections continue to this day.

The Orbán government has openly decided to silence all organizations criticizing its policies and activities. Major human rights organizations such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, TASZ or the EKINT continue to defend human rights victims and so far there is little the government can do about it. [But] in the past two years major human rights violations have occurred against asylum seekers. The government's

constant political campaign both against refugees and the EU have made an impact both on Hungarian citizens and European policies.

The refugee crisis of the past year and a half and the recent terrorist attacks have posed new challenges to both human rights protection and national security. While it seems clear based on evidence made public by the media that terrorist attacks are committed by European citizens, right-wing and xenophobic governments such as the Orbán-government are using these events for domestic political purposes, making a direct link between the two phenomenon. National security can and should be strengthened in a way that human rights of both asylum seekers and European citizens are respected. The EU as an institution should stand up much more robustly in all member states to make sure human rights continue to be respected.

The Orbán-government gives a typical right-wing response to the refugee crisis and to the crisis of the whole European Union by stressing the need to decrease common decisions made at the EU level and simultaneously redirecting them to the level of member states. I believe that Orbán uses national security interest and his fight against the EU as a weapon to shift attention away from the corruption cases of his government, poverty in the country and failure of our education and health care system. I believe that national security interest can only be defined as the interest of the whole Union. The European Union as a whole is indeed weakening because it has failed to work in a democratic and transparent way. But the answer to this crisis is not less Europe and more national security interest but more Europe and more common decisions made. Europe needs to become much more democratic, representatives of most of its institutions need be elected directly by EU citizens in a bid to regain trust.

Laws in the past year were amended in order to give more rights to national security agencies and the police more right to fight against terrorism. Due to heavy pressure by the opposition and civil society, the most horrendous planned amendments were taken out at the end. You have to understand that Orbán doesn't actually need to implement any drastic measures in the name of war on terror as long as he can make people believe that he is the protector of the country against all kinds of enemy. Orbán's main "enemies" in his rhetoric are not terrorists but the EU itself. As you can see in practice, he doesn't need "war on terror" to shut down major newspapers or shut up critical civil organizations. The Soros Foundation, UNHCR and the Norwegian Fund are the major donors of human rights organizations. The government has declared them as number one enemy to its power as they are seen as the financiers of the opposition.

Laws are more or less are in place, implementation is the problem. As long as the government controls the police, the prosecutor's office and, more and more, the otherwise independent court, no laws can be good enough. When it comes to racist attacks against the roma, for example, in most cases the police refuse to apply the appropriate section in the penal code and ignore the racial motive of the crime. As a result, in criminal statistics you can hardly find any official racially motivated attacks in Hungary.

When you look at the case of Syria, even the very basic Art. 3 of the UDHR [Universal Declaration of Human Rights] – namely that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person – and Art. 5 on torture and cruel treatment, are questioned by the international community. The EU has so far failed to provide an appropriate response to the refugee crisis and the US is also paralyzed by Russia when it comes to [confronting] the Assad regime. When the most basic of all rights is questioned because of national interest, it is hard to talk about international consensus. Social rights are not recognized by most states either, and if you consider the fact the US has never ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, there has never really been a consensus on this issue. I strongly believe, for example, that apart from liberal rights, the right to shelter should be included in all national constitutions.

LATVIA

Maria Golubeva ***(The space for defending civil liberties "has shrunk tremendously…")***

Policy analyst with the Latvian think tank Providus, international policy consultant and historian

The most salient human rights issue in Latvia is LGBT rights. For me, the biggest challenge has always been to persuade the mainstream (in public policy) that also the rights of small groups of people in our society (e.g. LGBT, Roma, children with special education needs) are human rights, full stop.

Globally, the most salient challenge facing human rights activists is the increasing intolerance of governments towards dissent (e.g. in Russia and Turkey, but also, in gentler forms, in some EU countries, e.g. Hungary). In Latvia, the presence in the government coalition of a radical right-wing party precludes steps to make public policy more responsive to the needs of minorities, migrants and refugees.

[The worst human rights violators globally have been] violent organisations, sometimes also claiming to be states (e.g. Islamic State, Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republic) control large territories and commit human rights violations and murder civilians. In the EU, including Latvia, governments and parliaments sometimes attempt to limit human rights citing the threat of terror, or (in Eastern Europe) 'public morality'. In Central Asia, government institutions and public services (e.g. schools) often disregard or condone violations of human rights of persons who cannot defend themselves (e.g. children from poor families, prisoners, women married in a religious ceremony).

[Lavia] defines national security interests in terms of preservation of independence, sovereignty and democracy. On the whole I agree, but there should be more emphasis on preserving diversity, including diversity of opinion. In practice, [human rights protection and national security protection are often seen as conflicting challenges] in Europe and US…and in Russia national security protection is used as an excuse [for abusing human rights].

[Policy problems stemming from] the 'war on terror': Not from my own work experience: Difficulty persuading authorities not to send away people seeking asylum who might be persecuted in their own country (especially if they are from Muslim countries). From my own experience: Difficulty persuading officials, especially from Ministry of Interior, etc., that refugees should be perceived primarily as people in need of protection and not as threats to security.

The space [for defending civil liberties] has shrunk tremendously because human rights are no longer at the top of European agenda in foreign policy, as a result of the combined effect of financial and economic crisis of 2009 and the so-called migration crisis of 2015. Governments are increasingly catering to the fears of European populations, frightened by migration and seeking ways to return to pre-crisis living standards. Elsewhere, the absence of earlier pressures from the EU and the West in general has led to governments (especially autocratic governments) feeling free to lower the standards. The withdrawal of Soros money from most of Eastern Europe is a loss for defending human rights in the region. With countries like Russia and Turkey (and China in Asia) openly choosing the line that a strong state is more important than individual rights, a 'race to the bottom' is taking place, where lowering standards of human rights protection is a new norm.

[Those who are bearing the brunt of this worsening human rights situation are]: Women (there were attempts to forbid women who have not given birth to donate their cells); Teachers who address gender issues (changes in the Law on Education demand that 'immoral' teaching should be forbidden, leaving scope for interpretation). There were attempts to define as 'immoral' anything that goes against the article in the Constitution saying that marriage can be only between a man and a woman.
Not a human rights violation, but unfavourable policy: Refugees (the monthly benefit for refugees was decreased in 2015, making it virtually impossible to survive on that amount). Speaking of EU migration situation and refugee flows, right-wing politicians consistently refer to 'illegal migrants' rather than refugees.

Attacking migrants…and blaming them for threats of terror, has become commonplace scapegoating policy among politicians. This tendency has become much worse in recent years – with the migration crisis, Brexit, etc.

SLOVAKIA

Miriam Molnár ***("The space for defending civil liberties has both grown and shrunk at the same time.")***

Journalist, activist and writer on LGBT issues

[Globally, threats to dissent include] the general anti-intellectualism and anti-elitism of Western societies. The rise of far-right movements and political parties all over the EU and USA. The acceptance (once again) of semi-dictators.

[In Slovakia], the space for defending civil liberties has both grown and shrunk at the same time. It has grown because of support from international NGOs and European Union institutions. But it has also shrunk [due to] domestic politics [throughout] CEE centered around xenophobia and anti-EU ideas (partially because of uneven economic conditions and faulty EU practices). [Immediately following 9/11], powerful elites [in Slovakia] exploited 'war on terror' policies as a pretext for attacking political rivals and/or underprivileged members of society.

[Slovak authorities are scapegoating] the Roma, gays (LGBT in general), Muslims and refugees in general, Hungarians.

SLOVENIA

Natalija Vrecer ***("Fortunately civil society has become more active in recent years…but job insecurity and fear of refugees is weakening human rights protection…")***

Research fellow and activist with the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education and Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, trade union leader, migration expert providing state-sponsored refugee training who successfully initiated and advocated for legal changes that allowed thousands of Bosnian refugees who had struggled through ten years of exile without the right to work to obtain Slovenian citizenship

In some countries, human rights activists are still imprisoned. This is not the case in Slovenia, with the exception of some protesters against the ex-government, who were imprisoned for a couple of days. However, in our country, the work of human rights activists is mainly voluntary and especially young educated activists are unemployed, because there are not many jobs created for young intellectuals. In the times of economic crisis, since 2008 and after, in Slovenia the number of unemployed people increased, and among them there are many people with higher education. Although, according to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, the Labour Force Survey Results show that the unemployment rate fell to 7.8% in the 2nd quarter of 2016, not many new workplaces are created, especially for (young) people in humanities and social sciences. In this way, many young prospective human rights activists remain unemployed.

Fortunately civil society has become more active in recent years that it was a decade ago. It was characteristic for Slovenia that civil society was active in the eighties, in the nineties there was a backlash, mainly activists who dealt with refugees were very active, and in recent years, civil society became very active again due to the above-enumerated reasons.

Nowadays, workers' rights are more and more at stake in Slovenia. Some workers have such low salaries that they face difficulties to buy food and pay the rent. Many new jobs are temporary and not permanent and many people who work on a temporary contract are unwilling to fight for their rights, because they are afraid that their temporary contracts would not be prolonged. This fear is increased due to the scarcity of jobs in Slovenia, especially for intellectuals, so many people do not have a chance to get another job, if they are not satisfied with their job, or if they face violations of their workers'/human rights at work. As the role of trade unions is diminishing in many states, it is dangerous that employers might not be so inclined to employ human rights activists, because they would prefer people who are not very active in defending their rights and the rights of others. So the spread of workers' rights globally, would according to my opinion, increase civil society in global terms.

According to my experience, in Slovenia the government and employers are the most frequent human rights violators. The government often does not follow the rule of law, e.g. the laws are established with no intention to implement them. There are groups of lobbyists that try to control the resources and the decisions of the politicians and that very often results in breaches of human/workers' rights. Over the past decade the above-mentioned situation worsened in Slovenia. Especially, corporations globally seem to be inclined to violate workers'/human rights. It is important, therefore, that the European Union does not sign the TTIP and CETA free trade agreements, which would give corporations more power over the people and governments. If these agreements are signed, workers' rights would decrease significantly in the European states and the corporations would be able to sue the governments, if they would not have enough profit, e.g. in cases when the governments would increase the minimal salary etc.

According to my opinion, there are more and more people who became active citizens, so in a way, there is liberty to practice active citizenship in many states. However, the power of trade unions seems to be decreasing on a global level, which causes the decrease of workers'/human rights. On the other hand, the discourse on human rights among researchers and general public still has not improved significantly, because there are still some people who are not aware of the importance of workers' and other human rights, we need more awareness raising about that. This seems to be true for Slovenia and internationally.

In Slovenia, the refugee recognition rate is still very low, the government is afraid that too many migrants will come to our country. Refugees and migrants are still not considered as social, economic and cultural capital by the authorities, but are still approached more as a burden. When the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia dissolved in 1991, the members of other Yugoslav republics were not considered welcome by the authorities, namely they took away permanent residence of 25,671 persons living in Slovenia who had Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Macedonian or Kosova background. Those people are called "the Erased people". Due to the loss of permanent residence, many people became unemployed, they lost pensions, health insurance, IDs etc. Although the situation of the so called Erased people started to be improved in recent years, there are still many whose problems have not been solved yet and the authorities are currently not inclined to pay all indemnities.

We have three official minorities in Slovenia: Italians and Hungarians and the Roma with a special minority status. Despite common historical, political, economic and cultural ties with the successor states of Yugoslavia, their members who live in Slovenia do not have the statuses of minorities.

Hate speech is characteristic for some officials as for some other members of Slovene population. The word čefur was sometimes used by some Slovenes to mean a Bosnian and have a derogatory meaning, however, the meaning has changed in recent years and the word became popular and with a positive connotation. One of the reasons were educated and famous Bosnians who live in Slovenia who function as a role model. The major turning point in changing the meaning of the word čefur was the book of Goran Vojnović (a Slovene-Bosnian writer) entitled "Čefurji raus" (2008), in which he describes everyday life of young Bosnians living in Slovenia. After this book was published, the attitude of many Slovenes towards Bosnians changed and became more positive (I assume that includes officials in addition to the general public).

Since the autumn 2015, when nearly 500,000 refugees crossed Slovenian border with Hungary and Croatia and went mainly to Austria, Germany and the Scandinavian countries, the Slovenian government made a fence along the part of the Croatian border, so that refugees would not enter Slovenia anymore, they also presented refugees as a national security issue. However, Slovenia was mainly a transit country for them and most of them had no intention to stay in our country. Refugees and economic migrants should not be approached by the authorities as a national security issue and economic burden, but as an asset not only for humanitarian reasons but also due to the fact that the Slovenian population is decreasing and refugees and migrants are needed in Slovenia also as active workers (taxpayers).

RUSSIA

Ekaterina Sokirianskaia ***("Russia has become a dictatorship…")***

International Crisis Group director for Russia and the North Caucasus, Expert Council member with the Ombudsman of the Russian Federation, International Memorial board member, former head of the Memorial Human Rights Centre in Grozny and the Chechen Republic

The public space [for defending human rights in recent decades] has shrunk in Russia [thanks to] authoritarianism, terrorism, and the erosion of international institutions. A new body of laws restricts civic activity. Russia has become a dictatorship. The most common human rights violations in Russia are torture, enforced disappearance, fabricated trials, discrimination. State agencies and security services [are the most frequent violators]. This has changed from primarily federal agencies to primarily regional ones.

The biggest challenges [facing human rights activists are the fact that] human rights have ceased being a universal value, Russia largely rejects HR doctrine, and in many conflicts parties instrumentalize HR discourse without being authentically committed to it. The 'war on terror' has been used to justify abuses and to marginalize and delegitimize human rights work. Most of the human rights violations I deal with are committed within the framework of the 'war on terror'. Powerful elites have exploited 'war on terror' policies as a pretext for attacking political rivals and/or underprivileged members of society, especially in Chechnya.

Russia's national security interests = survival of the regime. [Authorities] directly equate human rights defenders and terrorists, accusing the former of being accomplices of the latter. [They are increasingly targeting] opposition [politicians], civil rights activists, liberals, LGBT, Ukrainians. [Officials] use trolls and bots to disseminate their message, distort information and hijack discussions. [Terms promoted by the regime include] Ukrop = Ukrainian, Wakh = Salafi Muslim, pindo = American (citizen of "fagland"), gayropa = Gay Europe.

Majority Muslim countries

PAKISTAN

Mukhtar Ahmad Ali ***("In general, the ability of human rights activists to discuss, highlight and seek redress of human rights concerns has improved [since 9/11]. However, where the concerns relate to inter-state conflicts or war on terror internally, whether directly or indirectly, human rights activists face extreme difficulties and their voices are suppressed in the name of national security.")***

Pakistan Information Commissioner for Punjab

Common human rights violations [that I address in my work] relate to, among others, freedom of speech and expression (attacks on journalists by state or non-state actors), children's rights (e.g. early marriages, lack of access to education, child labour, etc.), freedom of choice (e.g. women right to study, dress, work, vote and marry as per their own choice), minority rights (e.g. discrimination in jobs etc.), the right to life (e.g. extra-judicial killings by law-enforcement agencies and as a result of terrorism, etc.) and the right to information in relation to market and governance. My work is mostly about the right to information, police torture, right to vote, freedom of speech and right education. In the context of women rights, child rights, freedom of speech and right to information, Pakistan has made significant progress in overall terms, despite some setbacks due to security considerations in the face of terrorism. In several other areas, the situation has either improved slightly or not changed much or worsened, primarily because of the lack of economic opportunities, problem of terrorism and the greater risk of the abuse of enhanced powers vested in security institutions to counter terrorism. [The] greatest difficulties [faced by human rights activists] are (a) cultural practices that restrict individual freedoms, (b) lack of understanding about the importance of human rights for a just and a fair society, and (c) weak capacity and low sensitivity of governmental institutions to efficiently respond to cases of human rights violations.

The most salient challenges faced by human rights activists [in Pakistan] include (a) policies of major powers which have created or exacerbated inter-state or intra-state conflicts; and (b) problem of extremism and militancy, which has contributed to a worsening of human rights conditions and made the job of human rights activists difficult. [Other] challenges include (a) extremism, (b) an education system that doesn't inculcate human rights values, (c) internal and external conflicts, (d) a weak civil society, and (e) weak democratic institutions like political parties and parliament.

[The most frequent human rights violators in Pakistan are] terrorists; certain sectarian/ethnic groups who indiscriminately target members of other groups or security officials; personnel of law-enforcement agencies involved in torture, excessive use of force, extra-judicial killings or forces disappearances; and government officers, tribal leaders and other power wielders who deny rights to protect their power and privileges

[Over the past decade] there is definitely a greater recognition of human rights issues among political parties and state institutions. So, in general, the ability of human rights activists to discuss, highlight and seek redress of human rights concerns has improved. However, where the concerns relate to inter-state conflicts or war on terror internally, whether directly or indirectly, human rights activists face extreme difficulties and their voices are suppressed in the name of national security. Pakistan experienced a surge of violence perpetrated by terrorists against civilians as well as state institutions from 2001 to 2014 but it has lately subsided. In the meanwhile, however, law enforcement agencies have been vested with a lot more powers, which are frequently used without effective judicial oversight. As a result, there have been frequent reports of excessive use of force, especially in Karachi and Balochistan. [War on terror policies] have reduced operational space for NGOs/INGOs and media in certain areas (e.g. South Punjab, Balochistan, FATA, etc.), curtailed media freedom in relation to reporting on terrorism and military operations, and compromised the principle of due process in the context of military courts, etc. There have been allegations of excessive use of force against supporters of MQM in Karachi and Baloch nationalists in Balochistan. It has also been alleged that security agencies pick up individuals who may be suspected of sympathizing or supporting terrorists, and then keep them in unlawful custody for longer durations without courts' oversight.

Political parties have frequently criticized each other for being soft on terrorist groups. Terrorists have attacked and killed politicians who were perceived for taking hard-line against terrorist groups. There is, however, scarce evidence to suggest that powerful elites have exploited the war on terror to attack under-privileged groups. Derogatory terms such as 'anti-state elements', 'traitors', 'foreign agents' or 'miscreants' are used against those who may hold divergent views on certain security related policies, but [this] is not new. On the other hand, there exist laws which tend to discriminate against minorities such as Ahmadis or women. Lately, however, we have also seen initiatives aimed at positive discrimination by fixing/increasing quotas in jobs for women, disabled and minorities, or to counter harassment/violence against women. In general, authorities have not made a widespread use of social media for propaganda purposes, not at least in an explicit manner. However, there have been rumours that some security

organizations use fake social media accounts to promote their agenda, but these are hard to verify. In general, the war on terror has increased the influence of the security establishment on government policies not just in the areas of security but also in other sectors. It has undermined the democratic process, which could have evolved better if there was no war on terror.

The worsening security environment has certainly shrunk the space for defending civil liberties in many areas. In such an environment human rights defenders still feel insecure, but not as much as a few years back, as the situation in general has relatively improved due to reduced incidence of terrorism in major parts of the country. [W]e have also seen improvement in some other areas due to certain enabling factors such as relatively greater media freedom, continuity of democratic process, increased mobility of workforce, greater access of women to education, and marked reduction in incidents of terrorism i.e. following the successes of law-enforcement operations against terrorists over the last couple of years.

Babar Ayaz (***"Despite rising religious extremism, I think the space for human rights has expanded with the time… [We need] to find the balance between human rights and the laws which have been promulgated by various governments to counter terrorism."***)

Journalist, author, council member of the South Asia Free Media Association and Pakistan's Human Rights Commission (co-founded and chaired by Asma Jahangir, who has served as UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killings (1998-2004), Freedom of Religion and Belief (2004-2010), and currently Human Rights in Iran)

The most common human rights violations in Pakistan are against women and non-Muslim Pakistanis. In addition, Pakistan is major victim of terrorism and is at war against Islamic terrorist groups and Baloch separatists. In this war many human rights violations are reported by the people. Political activists are reported missing, and it is alleged that they have been picked up by the intelligence agencies. Mutilated bodies of these people are found in remote areas and there is no transparency when encounters with terrorists are reported by the government. In the last three decades, religious extremism has increased and has become a challenge for human rights as these extremists dictate by force. The Pakistani establishment's main targets are the Baloch separatist militants and the Islamist terrorists groups who defy the writ of the government.

Terrorism has spread across the globe and it has to be countered... However, in the post-Cold War period, this ['war on terror'] slogan has been used by the US to further its agenda. Much of the terrorism we see today is also the outcome of short-sighted policies of the US in Afghanistan and the Middle East. Most states have given more powers to security agencies to fight against terrorism, and some of these powers are a threat to human rights. Being victims of terrorism, many people support tough laws that suspend some of the basic human rights of the people. Sometimes the powers given to the security agencies to combat terrorism have been misused against underprivileged sections of society. Broad use of antiterrorism laws in many cases is questionable.

The change in the last decade has been that previously human rights violations [were committed largely] by the government, but the main issue now is that militant Islamic and ethnic groups are killing people with impunity. Minorities and blasphemers are targeted by the Islamic militants and not by the government. Religious extremists and the security agencies have overriding powers over the democratic governments, however. Because of the infamous blasphemy law in the country, the government arrests the people who are allegedly blasphemers. The space provided to so-called imminent religious personalities/opinion makers who discriminate against minorities like the Ahmadis or defend laws like blasphemy on mainstream media remains a big problem in Pakistan.

Despite rising religious extremism, I think the space for human rights has expanded with the time. Human rights are now supported by almost all political parties, civil society and the media. More and more countries are moving towards democracy and agree that human rights violations should be checked. The

information revolution in the post-Second World War period has globalised the world which also means that human rights values are becoming common across the globe. [We need] to find the balance between human rights and the laws which have been promulgated by various governments to counter terrorism.

Syed Mohammad Ali ***("The deteriorating security situation in my country and the increasing prevalence of violence to deal with criticism has made it increasingly risky to work on human rights issues and to try and highlight the concerns of those whose rights are being violated…")***

Journalist, professor and consultant for multiple international humanitarian organisations, with extensive experience conducting research in most parts of Pakistan

Within Pakistan, the religious right and the threat of being labeled blasphemous is a challenging threat, not only in terms of discriminating against the minorities, but also due to the inability of other more liberal groups to challenge the very rationale of the blasphemy laws. Globally, self-censoring and/or the subversion of human rights rhetoric in the face of donor pressures/expectations (such as the endorsement of Corporate Social Responsibility and the growing alliance of UN agencies with MNCs, for example) is perhaps the most insidious challenge facing human rights activists working with different international development stakeholders.

I cannot speak for others, but [for me] the deteriorating security situation in my country and the increasing prevalence of violence to deal with criticism has made it increasingly risky to work on human rights issues and to try and highlight the concerns of those whose rights are being violated.

The myopic emphasis on achieving security and stability through the exercise of force have enabled increasing use of military interventions (be it drone strikes or invasion of particular parts of the country, like FATA in Pakistan) and the collateral damage it causes in the form of destroying infrastructure, livelihoods and displacements has shrunk the space for defending civil liberties within societies plagued by violence (Pakistan is hardly the only country where this is happening, of course). The military offensive in areas where militants have made inroads in the country have caused massive displacements and the situation in Baluchistan has also not stabilized despite the tenure of two democratic governments subsequent to the targeted assassination of Nawab Bughti by the military-led government of President Musharraf.

The 'war on terror' has created a lot more socio-cultural friction within Pakistan and an increasing gap of perception between liberals and social conservative elements, which also makes it more difficult to address human rights problems such as marginalization or discrimination, since these issues are considered to be insidious attempts to impose a western agenda within the country.

More emphasis on security and use of force than development and reconstruction has left countries like Iraq and Afghanistan in a more precarious situation than before 9/11 and the implications of this negligence are now allowing groups like ISIS to cause further upheaval. The prosecution of peasants (belonging to the Anjumun Muhajreen Punjab) who had revolted against eviction from military controlled farms in Anti-Terrorism Courts is deeply problematic and an example of how powerful elites (the military) have used the pretext of the 'war on terror' to attack underprivileged members of society who challenges the economic interests of the military. Strategies like corporate farming emphasized by international agencies like the World Bank to enhance agricultural growth in Pakistan, for example, continues to exacerbate land scarcity of small farmers and undermines their right to a decent livelihood.

Ahmedia, Shias, Christian and Hindu minorities all seem to be victims of targeted killings, forced conversions, and accusations of blasphemy. The mob violence against minorities such as in Gojra a couple of years ago and again in more recent incidences is particularly troubling.

IRAN

Haleh Esfandiari ***("In autocratic countries like Iran there is not much room left for human rights lawyers.")***

Writer, scholar and the founding director of the Middle East Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C. She has served as the deputy secretary general of the Women's Organization in Iran. Her book ***My Prison, My Home: One Woman's Story of Captivity in Iran*** *details her experience of being held in solitary confinement in Evin Prison in Tehran for 105 days in 2007.*

Since I left prison in 2007, I have devoted a lot of my writings to political prisoners. In Iran there is a lack of respect for human rights and it stems from the paranoia of the regime. The regime feels it is threatened by western powers who plan to push for regime change through a soft revolution. No organization in Iran reaches out to foreign donors. They are worried they will be labelled as a foreign agent working for a foreign government. Social media has become another vehicle to control and go after the dissident and activist communities.

[The most common human rights violations in Iran include] unjust imprisonment, torture, solitary confinement, show trials, lack of recourse to an independent judiciary, no access to legal councils. The Bahaii and other minority groups continue to be targeted by the Iranian regime.

In autocratic countries like Iran there is not much room left for human rights lawyers. As an example I can site exiling Shirin Ebadi and closing her law office in Tehran. In recent years a number of human rights lawyers have been imprisoned for defending human rights activists.

TURKEY

[Note: One freedom of information lawyer and activist working in Turkey who was initially eager to participate later *declined* in light of the uncertain situation surrounding the crackdown against academics and others following the failed coup attempt].

Nükhet Kardam ***("As Erdogan has become more dictatorial, human rights have shrunk to the bottom of the agenda.")***

Human rights scholar and Turkish-American professor of international policy studies at the Monterey Institute in California who spends half of each year conducting research and teaching in Turkey

In Turkey [the 'space' for defending civil liberties] has definitely shrunk. I know that women's human rights advocates in Turkey say that their ability to defend women's rights has decreased with the AK Party regime, especially recently and after the coup attempt. As Erdogan has become more dictatorial, human rights have shrunk to the bottom of the agenda.

I frankly don't know [how the Turkish government currently defines its 'national security interests']. It is very confusing. Everybody is Turkey's enemy. And security interests are mixed with all kinds of conspiracy theories. I don't [view human rights protection and national security as competing challenges], but the people in power (in Turkey, also in the US) do. If you define national security as 'human security', then how can human rights protection not be part of national security?

[Turkish authorities] are definitely targeting both people associated with Fethullah Gulen, as well as with the PKK, or anyone who they think may have sympathies for these groups. I think they are using Armenian, for instance, as a derogatory term, accusing opponents as having Armenian background. The Gezi movement and their supporters on the streets were met with violence, but Erdogan supporters (civilians) were invited to go out on the streets.

GLOBAL (UK-based)

Scott Lucas ***("It's a perpetual fact that those in power will try to close down that space [for defending civil liberties]… In a world where we can see more because of the pace and scope of information, we paradoxically often do more to avoid seeing – or if we see, acting.")***

Journalist, founder and editor of EA WorldView, a leading website in daily news and analysis of Iran, Turkey, Syria, and the wider Middle East, as well as US foreign policy. University of Birmingham Professor of International Politics focusing on US and British foreign policy; current international affairs in North Africa, the Middle East, and Iran; new media; and intelligence services.

The pattern [of the most common human rights violations that I address in my work] hasn't changed much [over the past decade] – those in power will often commit violations of rights to ensure they retain power and that they avoid accountability. It is more the case that my focus has shifted. I used to be US-centric, focusing on Washington whether it was abuses inside the US or the abuses of foreign policy. While I still consider the abuses of power by those in power in the US, I now am thinking and writing more about what happens in local situations around the world. I don't want to set up any hierarchy. That enables those who wish to avoid their crimes to point at the others – "Don't look at us, look at the US!" "Why are you talking about us and not Iran?" "Why don't you speak about Israel?" "Why don't you address the leaders in Palestine?" etc etc. The challenges [for human rights activists working in the US or UK and globally] are the same. To give a voice to those who are being silenced, to represent those who are denied representation, to recover the words and acts of those who have been killed, to never forget that rights are not a luxury for some as they are denied to others.

It is just the scope that is different. In a world where we can see more because of the pace and scope of information, we paradoxically often do more to avoid seeing – or if we see, acting.

It's a perpetual fact that those in power will try to close down that space [for defending civil liberties]. It's just a question of context in the 21st-century: while supposedly defending "freedom of space", stigmatizing and monitoring those who speak out; while supposedly defending "religious values", detaining those who don't fit your conception of religion; while proclaiming economic liberty, shutting down those who raise challenging issues of poverty and the right to a decent and secure life.

[Although British officials are not] targeting [them] as such…I would say that Muslims [in Britain] have come under greater scrutiny both through official channels as well as the "unofficial" [channels] of the media and British political culture. [I]n many countries, the trick in justifying suppression is to deny rights while supposedly respecting the group or individual whose rights are being challenged. Thus, a measure is not "anti-Muslim"; it is to provide "religious diversity" or "security". A measure is not "anti-immigrant"; it is to maintain "order" or "stability". [O]f course "terrorist" is always a good catch-all to justify repression. [And] I do think that the conflicts in the Middle East and Iran have given rise to political-religious labels such as "Takfiri" [unbeliever or blasphemer –PK].

Iran from 2009 was a huge challenge for me because of the emotional toll of watching those in power crush hope. Syria from 2011 has magnified that many times because of the deaths and destruction – and the utter lack of justice and rights amid political violence, manipulation, and cowardice.

I do think that Iraq 2003 and Syria from 2011, in different but linked ways, have wielded devastation not only on those countries but on the space for talking about rights and the need for intervention to protect rights. Rights should never be sacrificed in the name of security. Security should never be ignored in the consideration of rights.

The War on Terror framework/label/justification was invoked to rationalize, initially in the US, to rationalize a set of domestic and overseas systems and actions. This was used by the Bush Administration for an unprecedented – and unconstitutional – extension of Executive power. Other countries used this label for their expansion of executive authority. To my knowledge, this framework has not directly affected me but I am conscious of always negotiating my activity with respect to the possible actions of the State.

I think the British Government – and indeed most governments – defines "national security" in an expansive way with respect to their own population. This has been exacerbated by circumstances such as the supposed threat of Communism, the conflict with the IRA, and the post-9/11 environment of the War on Terror.

The War on Terror immediately became a vehicle for attacking individuals and groups as suspect or worse. This was used at the highest level of politics, for example, by Bush against Kerry in 2004, but at the widespread level of trying to stigmatize the activities or positions of groups. For example, it has been used in Britain against CAGE, Liberty, and Reprieve. It has been invoked against CAIR in the US. And – beyond the US and UK – it has been twisted by others, be it Putin's pursuit of the war in Chechnya, the Chinese suppression of rights because of the supposed threat in the northwest of the country, or Israel's use of administrative detention.

There has been a direct effect [of the War on Terror] on re-defining rights, for example, over "enhanced interrogation", rendition, and surveillance. But there has also been a less-notice, perverse effect. Whenever a country is challenged over its suppression of human rights, it can play "What About....?" and point at the US as a violator that should be the center of attention.

While recognizing that security must be considered, I believe the priority is inverted with respect to rights. In other words, the founding assumptions – say with the current bill over Internet surveillance – are based on the perceived security needs, with rights contingent on these, rather than on a set of fundamental rights in which security needs are to be evaluated.

GLOBAL (EU-based)

Petr Lom ***("I live in Europe, and I really worry about democracy here. There seems to be an increasing corruption in the universal values that are supposed to underpin Europe, and especially the European Union.")***

Czech-Canadian human rights documentary filmmaker born in Prague in 1968, who has made award-winning films in countries including China, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Burma. He earned a doctorate in political philosophy from Harvard University, and taught at several universities before settling in Europe (Amsterdam-based) and becoming a full-time filmmaker.

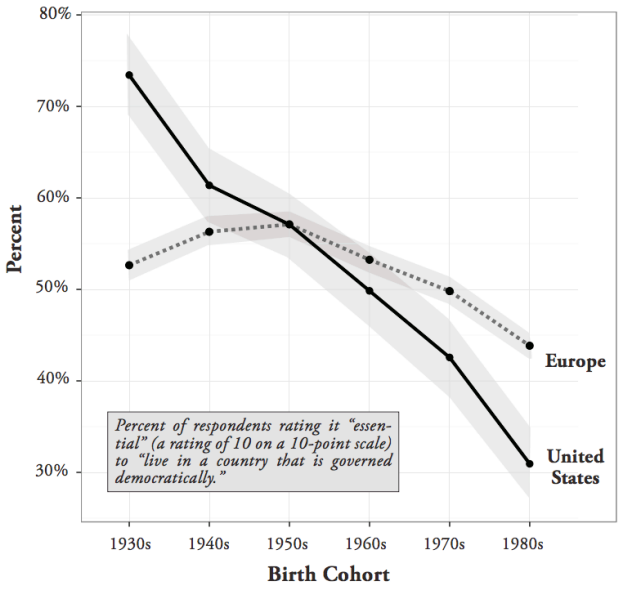
We make films… We try to change the world through storytelling. In the belief that inspiration above all – from admirable and beautiful people suffering injustice – can shift centres of gravity somewhere…. The common theme is injustice. This has not changed, ever.

[As regards the most salient challenges facing human rights activists today globally]: On one hand, Steven Pinker (2011) would have us believe that there is less violence in the world, a softer world. On the other hand, some argue now that there is increasing indifference and callousness in the world (see for example Foa and Mounk in the July 2016 issue of the Journal of Democracy). I live in Europe, and I really worry about democracy here. There seems to be an increasing corruption in the universal values that are supposed to underpin Europe, and especially the European Union. The reaction to the immigration crisis is a moral scandal in Europe.

Foa and Mounk: "Drawing on data from Waves 3 through 6 of the World Values Surveys (1995–2014), we look at four important types of measures that are clear indicators of regime legitimacy as opposed to government legitimacy: citizens' express support for the system as a whole; the degree to which they support key institutions of liberal democracy, such as civil rights; their willingness to advance their political causes within the existing political system; and their openness to authoritarian alternatives such as military rule.

What we find is deeply concerning. Citizens in a number of supposedly consolidated democracies in North America and Western Europe have not only grown more critical of their political leaders. Rather, they have also become more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system, less hopeful that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives. The crisis of democratic legitimacy extends across a much wider set of indicators than previously appreciated."

FIGURE 1—"ESSENTIAL" TO LIVE IN A COUNTRY THAT IS GOVERNED DEMOCRATICALLY, BY AGE COHORT (DECADE OF BIRTH)



Source: World Values Surveys, Waves 5 and 6 (2005–14). Data pooled from EU member states. Valid responses: United States, 3,398; European Union, 25,789. Bootstrap 95 percent confidence intervals are shown in gray.

From my own experience – particularly working two years in Egypt 2011-2013, and most recently Burma 2013-2016 – the State [is the most frequent violator of human rights]. And particularly the military when it rules over the State. A better political science term: mafiacracy.

[The 'space' for defending civil liberties globally has both grown and shrunk over the past decade.] I think democracy is under threat. Journalists are more and more threatened, their work is more and more difficult. On the other hand, social media makes it harder and harder to hide wrongdoing.

I always think [the idea that human rights protection and national security protection are conflicting challenges] is a shitty argument. People forget that a state also has to have moral legitimacy – and this is based on respecting the principles it is based on – if you fuck that up, your state will start to die of corruption. That is a deeper understanding of "national security" – not just protecting yourself from external enemies… The 'war on terror' = colossal stupidity. George Orwell would have a party. The result: lack of respect for human rights. Easy openness to charges of hypocrisy. The pursuit of raw power under a new label. Above all, because of the way it has corrupted public debate and discourse there is even, for example, a public discussion of torture (see Mr. Trump) that is openly accepted as something "normal" rather than scandalous.

Take Burma, for example. Abusing the Rohingya is sometimes justified as way of ferreting out so-called Muslim terrorists (even though there are none in Burma…) Or take the Uighurs in China. Same story. [P]ast abuse…has led to some extremism by the Uighurs, but that seems much more a result of the state's heavy-handedness.

GLOBAL (US-based)

Richard Falk ***("The [erosion of human rights protections] has worsened with the rise of what I call the popular autocrat, a leader elected on a platform that is dismissive of human rights and remains popular… [The prevalence of violence perpetrated against civilians] is also a characteristic of the way conflict is being conducted in the Middle East, and follows from the rise of autocratic government in many parts of the world… There is a phenomenon taking place that might be described as 'the ethnic nationalization of human rights' encouraged by political movements like BREXIT and Trump.")***

International human rights lawyer and scholar, former UN Rapporteur for the Palestinian Territories and member of the Independent International Commission on Kosovo. Senior Fellow in Global and International Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara and former Albert G. Milbank Professor Emeritus of International Law and Practice at Princeton University (retired). Member of the editorial boards of ***The Nation*** *and* ***The Progressive****. Chair of the Board of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. Former advisory board member of the World Federalist Institute and the American Movement for World Government*.

I have been interested academically in human rights as conceptually and potentially behaviourally subversive of national sovereignty, as well as in questions of legitimacy associated with the fact that human rights were largely a Western invention, and especially useful either as a propaganda tool in the Cold War or as a way of sustaining Western moral superiority in the post-colonial world. I suppose also I have become less preoccupied with civil and political rights in recent years, and more interested in economic, social, and cultural rights, and especially in the connections between the protection of human rights, growing economic inequality, and neoliberal globalization.

Corporations and states are the most frequent and dangerous violators [of human rights], abetted by different extremist groups that direct their venom toward vulnerable minorities. Globally, I would [say that the most salient human rights challenges are the] protection of migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons; and economic inequality causing half of the world population to live near or below subsistence levels.

In the US, I think these issues are also important, but also the societal consequences of economic inequality, and the resulting worsening material circumstances of 70% of the population in relation to health, education, housing, etc. The real impacts of economic inequality are being felt, and expressed through anti-establishment anger on the right and social democratic sentiments on the left (i.e. Trump, Sanders). Issues associated with Islamophobia have worsened the situation for the defense of certain human

rights [in the US and Europe], and more generally in situations connected with alleged terrorism. I suppose 'radical Islam' and 'Islamic fascists' are the most common [derogatory] terms [used by authorities]. Also, the use of the term 'migrants' rather than 'refugees' or 'asylum seekers' is a way of underscoring the rightlessness of displaced peoples, although the rights of refugees and asylum seekers are themselves minimal. [T]he anti-abortion movement…has definitely had a regressive impact on women's reproductive rights. Also, evangelical religious institutions have disseminated hostile information... On the other hand, there seemed more awareness of police brutality, prison abuses, and racial injustices. The Black Lives Matter movement is an expression of a new anti-racist human rights advocacy, the first serious effort since the civil rights movement.

The most obvious examples [of powerful elites exploiting war on terror policies as a pretext for attacking political rivals and/or underprivileged members of society] involve Muslims who are targets by society and government. Even the recent attacks on women wearing religious clothing [in France and elsewhere] is illustrative. This pattern is also linked to anti-immigrant developments in many states that purport to uphold human rights. There is a phenomenon taking place that might be described as 'the ethnic nationalization of human rights' encouraged by political movements like BREXIT and Trump.

The [erosion of human rights protections] has worsened with the rise of what I call the popular autocrat, a leader elected on a platform that is dismissive of human rights and remains popular (Putin, Modi, Abe, Duterte, etc.). [The prevalence of violence perpetrated against civilians around the world] is also a characteristic of the way conflict is being conducted in the Middle East, and follows from the rise of autocratic government in many parts of the world. It is certainly a serious problem in Occupied Palestine, especially in the Hebron area of the West Bank.

I have written rather extensively on the war on terror, how it has shaken the foundations of international humanitarian law and created justifications for extensive surveillance (Snowden), basically the abolition of privacy. The national security exception has tended to be given priority over human rights concerns. [Human rights protection and national security protection] should be complementary, but are often in conflict. This trend is also a consequence of the decline in democratic styles of governance. In the US, national security interests are given an almost unconditional priority as the validation of torture during the Bush presidency. The entire world has become a battlefield for both sides, the terrorists attacks wherever they seem able, and with drones and special forces the West retaliates wherever a target is found. The premium placed on obtaining information in advance of an attack or to identify targets is also characteristic of this era of preoccupation with transnational terrorism.

I think a more careful balancing of security against freedom concerns should be undertaken. It is difficult to assess as those that act against human rights claim that secret information justifies such action. At the same time, we know that the public demands that national security be upheld, and hold leaders accountable if they fail to do so. As the Arab saying goes: "The people prefer 100 years of tyranny to a single year of chaos."

J. Paul Martin (***The defence of human rights "is now more of an industry than a social commitment.")***

Director and professor of human rights studies at Barnard College at Columbia University, co-founder of Columbia's Institute for the Study of Human Rights over 40 years ago with the late Professor Louis Henkin – widely credited as 'the founder of human rights law' and the main negotiator of the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees among other central human rights documents and books. He has edited three collections of human rights documents and contributed to the Oxford Encyclopedia on Political Science and the Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East.

[The most common human rights violations that I address in my work] are gender-based violations in the US and overseas. [In my experience, the most frequent human rights violators are] organized criminals and

poorly trained government agents such as soldiers, police, corrections officers etc. Governments [tend to violate rights] for lack of action, corporations for being governed by their image, NGOs on account of the survival needs of their staff.

For better or worse, [one of the most salient human rights challenges to arise over the years has been] the institutionalization and professionalization [of human rights, placing] NGOs on top of the pile rather than at the bottom, at the delivery points. [Human rights advocacy] is now more of an industry than a social commitment. [Another challenge involves the] incorporation of human rights into all social service systems: education, healthcare, environment, prisons etc. [In practice, the challenges of human rights protection and national security protection are] conflicting. [A good investigation of how powerful elites can exploit 'war on terror' policies as a pretext for attacking political rivals and/or underprivileged members of society is] the report on India's Prevention of Terrorism Act [Gagné 2005].

Legal spaces [for defending civil liberties both in the US and globally have grown over the past decade], but other advocacy spaces (education etc.) have generally failed to integrate human rights into their day-to-day processes. [International donor policies have impacted the space for defending human rights globally, but only according to] their own terms. [US authorities are increasingly scapegoating] prisoners.

Participant responses: Human rights and 'new media'

HUNGARY

Peter Bajomi-Lazar: [New media] has not had a great impact on my work. [Authorities] mainly use social media to test messages before releasing them via the legacy media. Hungary had a free press before the 2010 legislative elections, while it has a partly free press to date, according to Freedom House and other media freedom watch organisations. All of the public service media and some of the private media have been turned into a means of pro-government propaganda. Controversial journalism practices such as black PR, advertorial and, possibly, blackmail have gained ground in recent years – black PR (or kompromat) can be especially harmful for the individuals targeted. Access to information is limited for citizens (e.g., on the second atomic power plant now under construction in the city of Paks). As there is no media freedom without information freedom, it is safe to say that media freedom is largely missing in Hungary. As a consequence, citizens cannot make informed choices when casting their ballot. It follows that Hungary to date does not even meet the criteria for a minimal, or electoral, democracy… Just recently, a law amendment enabled the secret services to request online and mobile databases to release basically any personal data, including passwords. A recent Index article details how the secret services can observe basically everything one does in the online sphere.

Timea Szabo: Accessing people and networks is much easier [thanks to new media], especially in Hungary where the media is now dominated by the government. [But] media and press freedom has been oppressed after amendments to the media law. Interestingly, in Hungary authorities use social media much less than they could (they still prefer traditional media like TV, radio and internet portals).

LATVIA

Maria Golubeva: Work with Central Asia issues has only become possible for me due to the internet. In a number of countries [authorities have made use of social media to spread official propaganda that might be harmful to specific groups of people]. First of all in Russia – quite a lot. There are better experts than me who could explain this in detail.

SLOVAKIA

Miriam Molnár: [Thanks to the Internet] it is much easier to communicate with each other now, all over the world. On the other hand, if any communication falls into the wrong hands, it can have grave consequences (LGBT activists in [countries in] Africa, or China, or Iran, etc). Personal online attacks on human rights activists (women especially) are also a huge negative. Russia famously spends millions if not billions on propaganda websites and TV/radio broadcasts that are spreading Kremlin propaganda [throughout] the ex-Soviet territory. To my surprise, these are highly successful. The fact that Larry King works for a Russian state sponsored TV says a lot about the times we live in.

SLOVENIA

Natalija Vrecer: Due to the use of internet and social media, I started to advocate human rights in more states than my own, because I sign petitions concerning human rights abuses in different states regularly. I am also more aware of the problems around the world including those in my country. I have not [seen Slovak authorities use new media to target vulnerable groups].

RUSSIA

Ekaterina Sokirianskaia: I use [both the internet and social media] extensively [for my work. Russian authorities] use trolls and bots to disseminate their message, to distort information and hijack discussions.

PAKISTAN

Mukhtar Ahmad Ali: [New media] has enabled us to have prompt access to information and resources abroad. It also enables activists to use social media to highlight issues which may not be picked up by the mainstream media. In general, authorities have not made a widespread use of social media for propaganda purposes, not at least in an explicit manner. However, there have been rumours that some security organizations use fake social media accounts to promote their agenda but these are hard to verify. At least two provinces have also enacted good RTI [Right to Information] laws. The democratic process, despite setbacks, has stayed the course; the media is relatively free; and social media offers a lot of space to freely discuss a wider range of issues…

Babar Ayaz: The information revolution in the post-Second World War period has globalised the world, which also means that human rights values are becoming common across the globe. Communication between the people has become easier thanks to the latest technology, [which] is fully exploited by human rights activists in [disseminating] messages and collecting people for rallies. [The problem of authorities using social media to spread official propaganda that might be harmful to specific groups of people is] not experienced in Pakistan.

Syed Mohammad Ali: The Internet enables me to remain connected to what's going on in Pakistan, and to be able to conduct research relying on multiple sources, to be able to write my weekly op-ed, for instance. The space provided to so-called imminent religious personalities/opinion makers who [use social media to] discriminate against minorities like the Ahmadis or defend laws like blasphemy on mainstream media remains a big problem in Pakistan.

TURKEY

Nukhet Kardam: Certainly, [new media] helps me keep in touch with news internationally and from Turkey. I am sure you have heard how Erdogan made use of Facetime to mobilize his supporters to stop the coup attempt in July. That was pretty amazing. Some people thought that without that Erdogan may not have prevailed. So social media is neutral in itself and depends on how it is sued.

IRAN

Haleh Esfandiari: I get a lot of my information through the Internet and social media. Social media has become another vehicle to control and go after the dissident and activist communities. On the other hand, without social media we would have not been able to follow the violations of human rights.

UK/GLOBAL

Scott Lucas: I couldn't do what I do without the changes in electronic and social media. [Authorities made use of social media] not just [for] the spread of official propaganda. Government agencies and non-governmental groups are setting up networks and practices to try and justify abuses – or divert our attention from them or deny them. Russia is just one examples of a State which is developing systematic approaches to trying to redefine "what we think" – through their version of information and, quite often, disinformation – by working with numerous outlets who, wittingly or unwittingly, carry out the aim of obscuring the reality of abuses.

EUROPE/GLOBAL

Petr Lom: [The internet and social media has opened channels for] communication, and showing films – but in some places like Burma – where the internet is still very slow – this is not possible. I read about what the Russians are doing, and they are very good at it. In Burma, of course, the propaganda against the Rohyinga and Muslims in general is quite atrocious, and social media is full of it.

US/GLOBAL

Richard Falk: [The Internet and social media] has facilitated transnational solidarity efforts, in particular. It has enabled support for victims of abuse anywhere in the world to be organized quickly and cheaply, and often effectively. Also, it makes it easier to gather information on recent human rights concerns, almost in real time. Social media is a tool that can be used to uphold or undermine human rights. Governments can give credibility to allegations of anti-state behaviour to mobilize public opinion, etc.

J. Paul Martin: [New media have brought] immediate source of information, communication, mobilization [which can be used for good or bad].

Participant responses: The future of human rights protection

Peter Bajomi-Lazar ***("I used to give interviews [but] as of this year…I gave it up. I am afraid I may lose my job. The recent rise of neo-authoritarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, including in Hungary, in Poland and in Russia, and also in Turkey, is a sign that neither governments nor the majority of the population is devoted to [human rights] in this part of the world… I personally am rather pessimistic about the future, and do not see much room for action… The incumbent government [in Hungary] should be removed… A renewed and stronger European Union could be of help…")***

The lectures held by Professor János Kiss and other prominent academics on liberalism [at a at the Central European University] had a great influence on me. Hence my interest in human rights, especially in media freedom. I am a classic liberal, or libertarian, on most issues, i.e., I like to read works by political philosophers such as John Stuart Mill, but have also been influenced by modern authors such as the media researcher John Keane, among others. In recent years, I also developed an interest in questions of equality of opportunity (as well as 'green' issues)... Some of my academic writings such as my recent book on Party Colonisation of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe (Central European University Press, 2014)

suggest that media policy alone cannot improve the status of media freedom in the former communist countries, that is, not without the reform of the entire constitutional framework, including the election system. While some of my works are used as a reference in other authors' academic papers, I do not think any of them has ever had any actual impact on media policy. Academics like me have little impact on policy decisions in this part of the world. In terms of teaching, some students of mine have developed an interest in media freedom issues, and may continue their academic careers in this field.

I used to give interviews to radio stations and television channels as well as write opinion articles on media freedom issues relating to Hungary – this is, I believe, the way an activist should disseminate his or her ideas. As of this year, however, I gave this up, as – being a university professor employed by the Hungarian state which, in turn, has been captured by the Fidesz party – I am afraid I may lose my job. Also, I was active in this field for about 15 years, but did not have any tangible impact on media policy. I still speak and write about media freedom issues in Hungary at international conferences and in research papers – but not in the Hungarian language any more.

[Regarding recommendations for reforms], the Base Law (as they call the constitution today) should be abolished and a new one should be passed. In order for this to happen, however, the incumbent government should be removed (which is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future).

[H]uman rights – including free speech – are universal in nature, at least theoretically speaking. The recent rise of neo-authoritarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, including in Hungary, in Poland and in Russia, and also in Turkey, is a sign that neither governments nor the majority of the population is devoted to this issue in this part of the world. It is [noteworthy that] some of the pro-government media in Hungary overtly rejects human rights and human rights activists.

Speaking of Europe, a renewed and stronger European Union, with extended legislative and executive powers, could be of help – but right now, the popular support needed for this to happen seems to be lacking. The rise of neo-authoritarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe challenges, by definition, human rights in the region. I personally am rather pessimistic about the future, and do not see much room for action. All one can do right now is observe and describe political developments, explore causal links between events, and hope that this knowledge could be of some use in the future, once it comes to legislative reform (if ever).

Timea Szabo ***("I am pessimistic [about the future of tolerance for dissent and human rights defence], as due to domestic political reasons, the international community seems more and more reluctant to intervene in human rights crises… There should be a civil body independent from states set up with a mandate to oversee human rights practices and order appropriate interventions.")***

When I was eight, I saw a Hungarian cartoon on TV named Frakk and the lazy cats, which was about a dog and two cats getting into all sorts of trouble. That particular episode was about an old lady who was depressed because she was going to spend Christmas alone. At the end, the dog and the two cats organized some company for the lady and everyone was happy. Realizing that some people are alone and vulnerable made me deeply upset. The next day I organized a Christmas concert at a retirement home with my classmates, and ever since I've spent my life helping those less fortunate than I am. Throughout elementary and high school, I organized visits to nursery and retirement homes. At the age of 20, I volunteered at a homeless shelter for women and children for years. I also worked at refugee camps in Pakistan and worked at human rights civil organizations in Afghanistan. In Hungary, I co-founded a political party, which primarily aims to restore the respect for human rights in the country. As a left-green opposition MP, I have also served as co-chair for Parliament's Human Rights Committee.

[Thinkers, writers, and activists who have inspired me most include] Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, many current Afghan activists who never give up hope to reconstruct their life. In Hungary there are also many civil activists who work day and night to help the poor and [those] repressed by the government.

The greatest reward is when we can actually achieve something good. I have for instance managed to free a women's activist and three ethnic Hungarians in Serbia from prison. In the area of child hunger and poverty, I have pushed the government to allocate more funding to solve the problem. Laws [for better protecting citizens against human rights violations] are more or less are in place, implementation is the problem. I [also] strongly believe for example that apart from the liberal rights, the right to shelter should be included in all nation's constitution.

The UN should [be best-positioned to defend the victims of arbitrary actions by states], but when China and Russia can practically veto anything at the Security Council and when you currently have countries like Saudi Arabia and Russia on the Human Rights Council, there is little that can be done in practice. There should be a civil body independent from states set up with a mandate to oversee human rights practices and order appropriate interventions when necessary in order to avoid politically motivated vetoes and delays in such cases. Of course, among other things, the question is raised immediately about who would elect such a body.

I am pessimistic [about tolerance for dissent and the future of human rights defence], as due to domestic political reasons, the international community seems more and more reluctant to intervene in human rights crises. It is worrying to think about what will happen when climate refugees will flood Europe when the international community cannot even deal with the current Syrian crisis properly.

Maria Golubeva ***("[I am] moderately optimistic [about the future of human rights defence] in some regions (e.g. Eastern Europe), moderately pessimistic in other regions… Perhaps a revamped UN [is needed]. But I do not have a proposal for how to mobilise political support for its reforms.")***

[I became interested in human rights issues for] two reasons: 1) As an LGBT person, some time between 20 and 25 I began to realise that not all people have the same rights, 2) I began work with the Civic Education Project in 1999 and quickly realised that the values of democracy and open society that I was supposed to promote sometimes clashed with some beliefs voiced by my students and [those] of the Latvian society at large (e.g. attitude towards gender, the goal of the state to serve only the founding nation, etc).

[Thinkers who have inspired me the most include] Karl Popper, Jurgen Habermas and many others.

When I do engage in projects to promote values related to rights and democracy (e.g. girls' rights in education in Central Asia, the right of mobile EU citizens to participate in politics where they live, etc), my day is usually divided between working on materials for awareness raising and/or training (e.g. policy briefs, handbooks, etc) and co-organising events at which the training/coalition building/awareness raising takes place. I communicate on e-mail (sometimes in person or on skype) with my colleagues and we plan our events and interventions, from main talking points to logistics. When the events themselves take place, it is usually a rewarding experience. The greatest challenge is to keep engaging even though after so many years experience tells me that change is usually slow and direct impact of projects is often difficult to trace.

[International consensus can be found in the meaning of] social justice – probably yes. Human rights – only if a very limited interpretation is used, leaving out some rights related to gender, faith and reproductive health. The rights to life, free speech, education and freedom from poverty should in my opinion be prioritised globally, hoping that recognition of other rights will become easier when there is less poverty and violence, and more education.

Perhaps a revamped UN [may be best-positioned to defend the victims of arbitrary actions sanctioned by states]? But I do not have a proposal for how to mobilise political support for its reforms.

[I am] moderately optimistic [about the future of human rights defence] in some regions (e.g. Eastern Europe), moderately pessimistic in other regions.

Miriam Molnár ***("I have seen a lot of progress that was achieved in the 1990s being reversed in the 2000s in Slovakia and Hungary, so it is hard for me to be super optimistic right now… The UN is not working as Eleanor Roosevelt envisioned it. When there is no way to accept a resolution against Russia because Russia has veto power, how can anything be actually done?")***

[Regarding my interest in human rights issues], I think I was sort of born into it.

I was born in Bratislava, where in the 70s it was still pretty common for all inhabitants to speak three languages – Slovak, Hungarian and German – and understand others (Czech and the many dialects in the neighbouring regions). I grew up in Velky Meder, a small town with a long history (it became an official 'town' 750 years ago), 10 minutes by car from the Hungarian border and 60 minutes from Austria. My mother's sister lives in the Czech Republic and her family came to visit every summer. My mother had relatives in Hungary and they came to visit as often as they could. (During the 'communist' times, travel within the 'communist' block was sometimes limited, and not limited other times. Travel to the West was very limited, it took my father over 10 years to get an exit visa and [enough money] to go with it and he could only take one child with him, not his wife and other child.)

The little multinational town where I grew up was mostly Hungarian, minority Slovak and Roma with a few Czechs. Thousands of Czechs and East Germans came to the spa in the summer on vacation. I knew from an early age that the Roma were looked down upon by all. Hungarians and Slovaks were in a constant war of words when it came to history and national achievements. I remember hearing about teachers in the Hungarian-language primary school telling their students that they don't have to learn Slovak (the official language of the state) and spreading hatred towards Slovaks. I'm sure the same thing was happening in Slovak schools towards Hungarians elsewhere in Slovakia. In my school, a Slovak-language school in a town of 95% Hungarians, nobody ever said anything nasty about Hungarians. There was never any talk about gay people in my childhood. After the changes in 1989, I got close to 'big politics' for a while and it was clear that minority rights have to be guaranteed by the majority.

Only the high party officials had rights and privileges under the old regime (1948-1989). Human rights were non-existent. My family listened to the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe daily. We watched Austrian TV and listened to Austrian radio and knew what was going on in the world. We also knew not to talk about any of this to anybody else, except people who we knew thought the same as we did. It was clear to me from an early age that the official propaganda was false, that news was mostly untrue and that to survive, we had to pretend.

It took me a long time to understand that the philosophy of the Dalai Lama, Gandhi and MLK makes the most sense. [T]he most influential [thinkers, writers, activists in my life have been the] human rights and minority rights activists whom I've met in person and [seen] making very specific changes in their environments: LGBT activists in Hungary and Slovakia, minority politicians in Slovakia, Roma-rights activists in the CE region, women's right activists from the Open Society Institute.

Even if the legislation is [in place], if the governmental, police and law enforcement employees do not enforce them and do not act in accordance to them, the law itself does not do any good to those whose rights are violated. I do not think that [international consensus can be found in the meaning of 'human rights' and/or 'human security' and/or 'social justice' across cultures]. I am not sure there [are any international governing bodies that are well positioned to defend the victims of arbitrary actions sanctioned

by states]. The UN is not working as Eleanor Roosevelt envisioned it. When there is no way to accept a resolution against Russia because Russia has veto power, how can anything be actually done?

I admire people who work in human rights, and I hope they will never stop. [But] I have seen a lot of progress that was achieved in the 1990s being reversed in the 2000s in Slovakia and Hungary, so it is hard for me to be super optimistic right now.

Natalija Vrecer ***("I am worried about the future of human rights defence, because the awareness of human rights is still very low among some people. Workers' rights are at stake in Slovenia and globally, because the role of trade unions is decreasing [while the power of corporations is increasing]… The European Union and United Nations should monitor whether states which ratified conventions are really implementing them… It is important that the international [human rights] bodies (e.g. the International Criminal Court in Hague etc.) function on a long-term and not short-term basis.")***

I became partially interested in human rights issues during adolescence, when I listened to Joan Baez in [Slovenia in] grammar school. Her songs of protest and the human rights movement that she joined made me interested in that field and invoked a spirit of protest against injustice in me. In 1992, when refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina came to Slovenia, I became even more interested in human rights issues and I started to deal with that topic as an anthropologist. The perspective of human rights is a [given when] approaching the topic of refugees. However, it did not seem sufficient for me to do merely anthropological fieldwork and research, because it did not contribute much to solving the problems of refugees. So I started to advocate for their rights besides doing research, and later on I became involved in the policy process at the national level. In 2002, I became a member of a trade union and became more interested in advocating for workers' rights as well, namely, the right to work as a human right. In 2011, I became a trade union representative at our institute and started to spend more time advocating for the rights of workers. For more than two decades, I have [participated in] demonstrations in support of workers' rights and the human rights of vulnerable groups.

Besides Joan Baez, I have been most inspired by Vaclav Havel, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. It seemed amazing to me how they were able to transfer bad conditions into good opportunities, to them this was not a coincidence, but a skill they possessed and were able to employ it consciously. And as Joan Baez said about Vaclav Havel, they were all willing to take risks.

In order to contribute to the community of refugees, I started to deal with the advocacy of their human rights (writing research and newspaper articles, organizing roundtables, cooperating with NGOs and governmental institutions…), and became involved in the policy process. I [also] try to be acquainted with the theoretical research on the topic and if possible, contribute to it and do anthropological fieldwork.

At the beginning of my scientific path in the nineties, I also encountered problems with my superiors due to the fact that I was a woman. I was considered more a sexual object and the inspiration for the ideas instead of being considered as junior researcher who needs to be introduced to work tasks and advised regarding the Master's that I was writing. At that time, in Slovenia, the laws against sexual harassment were not developed yet and even now, when we have the laws, it is difficult for women to fight against such a harassment.

[Regarding legal reforms], firstly, it is important to implement the human rights legislation that already exists. The European Union and United Nations should monitor whether states which ratified conventions are really implementing them. They should also monitor more closely and prevent states [from ratifying] conventions and then deny the provisions [of human rights legislation] in national laws. Some conventions

were written decades ago and should be [reconsidered within] the context of the current social, cultural, political and economic spheres of contemporary societies.

It is important that the international [human rights] bodies (e.g. the International Criminal Court in Hague etc.) function on a long-term and not short-term basis. Despite different historical, geographical and cultural contexts of states globally, I think that it [is] important that the states attempt to find international consensus in the meaning of the terms ['human rights' and/or 'human security' and/or 'social justice' across cultures]. Many human rights activists around the world claim that fundamental human rights are universal and characteristic for all cultural contexts (e.g. Wilson 1997, etc).[1]

I am worried about the future of human rights defense, because the awareness of human rights is still very low among some people. Workers' rights are at stake in Slovenia and globally, because the role of trade unions is decreasing [while the power of corporations is increasing].

Ekaterina Sokirianskaia ***("[I am] optimistic about the future of human rights defence] in the Western world if applied to Western societies. [I am] not optimistic elsewhere, including Western practices abroad… Russia [must] change the [anti] NGO legislation and get rid of the foreign agent law concept to [allow] civil society to revitalize, liberalize anti-extremism/anti-terrorism legislation, and improve practices rather than [only] law.")***

[I became interested in human rights issues] after I learnt about atrocities committed by the police from my native [Russian] city in Chechnya. [The thinkers, writers, activists who have inspired me most are] the chair of Polish Helsinki Committee Marek Novitsky; Sergey Kovalev of Memorial [Russian human rights NGO] and Svetlana Gannushkina of Memorial.

[Regarding recommendations for legal reforms] in Russia: Change the [anti] NGO legislation and get rid of the foreign agent law concept to [allow] civil society to revitalize, liberalize anti-extremism/anti-terrorism legislation, and improve practices rather than [only] law.

For Europe, the ECHR [European Court of Human Rights is best-positioned to defend the victims of arbitrary actions sanctioned by states]. International consensus can be found on the universality of the right to life, prohibition of torture, [and right to a] fair trial.

[I am] optimistic about the future of human rights defence] in the Western world if applied to Western societies. [I am] not optimistic elsewhere, including Western practices abroad.

Mukhtar Ahmad Ali ***("I am optimistic [about the future of human rights defence]… in Pakistan, certain laws which have long been criticized for being discriminatory against women and minorities need to be reformed. Even more importantly, Pakistan needs whole-scale criminal justice sector reforms to improve its police, prosecution and judicial service.")***

My first job was with an organization working on human rights and humanitarian issues. Initially, it was just a job for me, but gradually, as I studied and learned about the subject, [I became more] interested. In

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[1] Wilson, Richard A. (ed.) (1997). *Human Rights, Culture and Context: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.

Pakistan, the work of human rights activists like Dr. Eqbal Ahmad, Asma Jahangir and I. A. Rehman has inspired me a great deal.

[Regarding recommendations for reforms] in Pakistan, certain laws which have long been criticized for being discriminatory against women and minorities need to be reformed. Even more importantly, Pakistan needs whole-scale criminal justice sector reforms to improve its police, prosecution and judicial service. As it is, the criminal justice system is inefficient, incompetent and can be manipulated by the powerful individuals or groups. It discriminates against certain groups and fails to win public trust.

Worrying factors include continued tensions in the region with serious implications for Pakistan (e.g. Afghanistan, uprising in Kashmir, India-Pakistan tensions, etc.), militarization of society in the wake of war on terror, and relatively little success so far in countering the sources of extremism (e.g. hate-laden sectarian discourse, content of school textbooks, weak state capacity to fairly act against hate speech, poverty, failing state education system and the inability of the judicial system to deliver justice).

No international body is adequately trusted in Pakistan for its ability to protect the victims of arbitrary actions sanctioned by the State. International bodies such as the UN and EU have influence, but there have been very few instances where it could be successfully leveraged to protect victims.

[Nevertheless], I think that there exists a broad agreement [on the meaning of human rights across cultures], as evident from the number of signatories to international conventions such as the UDHR [Universal Declaration of Human Rights] and the ICCPR [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights]. In Pakistan, we have a chapter on fundamental rights in the Constitution, which is largely consistent with the internationally acknowledged human rights. So, while there exists a broad agreement on principles, the finer details are likely to vary across cultures and it is understandable. In my view, the gap in practices across nations can be significantly bridged by investing in the human rights education. A lot of criticism of the human rights regime is based of misunderstood nations.

I am optimistic [about the future of human rights defence]. Recently, we have enacted some good laws to protect women, children and minorities. At least two provinces have also enacted good RTI [Right to Information] laws. The democratic process, despite setbacks, has stayed the course; the media is relatively free; the social media offers a lot of space to freely discuss a wider range of issues; and it appears that the war on terror within Pakistan has been largely won.

Babar Ayaz ***("I am optimistic [about the future of human rights defence] because the world is moving toward accepting twenty-first century democratic values. What worries me is religious extremism becoming more assertive and dragging down the process of progress… The legal system [in Pakistan] must be revamped so that the cases can be decided quickly and the lawyers can defend people without any fear.")***

[I became interested in human rights issues because] my mother was Justice of the Peace, and she would help people wherever she felt rights were violated. When I entered college in 1965, there was a military government in the country and a movement for democracy. I got involved as a student holding rallies and distributing pamphlets for the rights of the people. As a college student I also dedicated some of my time to work with the trade union leaders. [I've been] inspired by Karl Marx, Bertrand Russell and many left-wing Urdu writers.

I'm 67 years old and most of my day is spent reading and writing. I'm a council member of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and the South Asia Free Media Association. In both capacities I am actively involved in raising human rights and freedom of expression issues. The difficulties that I face are saying/writing my views in a society where religious extremism is [at its] height and the establishment does not take criticism of its policies in the right spirit. [The] greatest reward for me is the satisfaction that despite all odds, I have openly maintained my secular humanist position on all issues.

[Regarding reforms to strengthen human rights protection], the government has established its own human rights commission but it [lacks sufficient] power. Particularly when it comes to seeking explanation and taking action against the security agencies controlled by the military, this government-appointed commission faces the brick wall. The legal system [in Pakistan] must be revamped so that the cases can be decided quickly and the lawyers can defend people without any fear.

Despite rising religious extremism, I think the space for human rights has expanded with the time. Human rights are now supported by almost all political parties, civil society and the media. More and more countries are moving towards democracy and agree that human rights violations should be checked. All basic rights should be promoted as universal. This is particularly important because poverty [causes] billions of people [throughout the world to be] deprived of their basic rights. The United Nations can [be the best-positioned body to defend the victims of arbitrary actions sanctioned by states], provided it focuses more on [such actions] and comes out [from under] the influence of the US.

I am optimistic [about the future of human rights defence] because the world is moving toward accepting twenty-first century democratic values. What worries me is religious extremism becoming more assertive and dragging down the process of progress.

Syed Mohammad Ali ***("The gaps between the elaborate and widely embraced rhetoric concerning protection of human rights and glaring and lingering deprivations found on the ground remains troubling and disconcerting. I see human rights violations as part of a larger hierarchical system of exploitation, where longstanding disparities between countries result in and sustain even more problematic disparities and deprivations within them.")***

I have been working in and researching the international development sector for the past fifteen years, and invariably I have confronted issues of marginalization, disempowerment and exploitation, all of which have obvious human rights implications. Unemployment is perhaps the biggest challenge I face, given my reluctance to become a bureaucrat within one of the many mammoth development agencies, which include not only multilateral or bilateral agencies but also large INGOs. My work on human rights has been influenced by the particular consultancy needs of the varied development entities I have worked with, but being a freelance consultant, I think I remain free from any particular ideological presuppositions (a Marxist leaning, market-based disposition, etc.) which guide the work of many other people working in the international development sector (which does invariably deal with human rights issues). Western writers like Foucault or Gramsci have helped me understand the complex yet subtle manifestations of power or issues such as hegemony. Dependency School writers and post-development thinkers like Arturo Escobar have also helped me gain insight into the historical legacies underlying processes of under-development, as well as the over-technocratic nature of development processes. Within my own country, the work of Hamza Alavi on the 'over-developed state', and the scholarly contribution of Akmal Hussain and Imran Ali has helped me understand our agrarian political economy, in particular.

The right to freedom, choice, and livelihoods etc. are basic and universal. [Regarding recommendations for reforms], the need to effectively implement recently introduced legislation is very important, such as that concerning the protection of women rights or to prevent bonded labour, for example. NGOs and donor agencies can help defend victims of state violence, but human rights violations by multilateral corporations, agencies, and foreign governments [should be given more] attention.

The gaps between the elaborate and widely embraced rhetoric concerning protection of human rights and glaring and lingering deprivations found on the ground remains troubling and disconcerting. I see human rights violations as part of a larger hierarchical system of exploitation, where longstanding disparities between countries result in and sustain even more problematic disparities and deprivations within them.

Nukhet Kardam ***("I am not optimistic [about the future of human rights defence]… I see more and more divisions, more people seeing the world through dualisms, black and white worldviews… And as long as we don't have an agreement on moral principles, most importantly, trust, mutual reciprocity and sincerity, we won't be able to engage in dialogue, except in small pockets… I know that EU funding has supported the training of judges, police, and lawyers in order to implement women's rights legislation more effectively... I don't have much faith in international bodies [defending the victims of arbitrary actions by states], as long as powerful states don't take them seriously.")***

Being a woman from Turkey, and knowing that there are women's human rights issues in Turkey [is what sparked my interest human rights]. Also, there was a Women in Development Center at Michigan State University where I did my PhD, which supported my research on women. Later in my academic work, I wanted to see more clearly how global women's human rights norms were implemented. Those days, it wasn't called women's human rights but women in development. I think my interest subconsciously had something to do with my date rape in Turkey when I was 19 – my first sexual experience.

[Thinkers, writers, activists who have inspired me most include] Rumi, Ibn-al Arabi, Martin Buber, Edward Said, Amin Maalouf…

[Regarding recommendations for ways to better protect citizens against human rights violations], I know that EU funding has supported the training of judges, police, and lawyers in order to implement women's rights legislation more effectively. I don't think [international consensus be found in the meaning of 'human rights' and/or 'human security' and/or 'social justice' across cultures, based on the protection of fundamental human rights]. I have grown cynical as I got older. I don't have much faith in international bodies [defending the victims of arbitrary actions by states], as long as powerful states don't take them seriously.

I am not optimistic [about the future of human rights defence]. I see more and more divisions, more people seeing the world through dualisms, black and white worldviews. I think that we as individuals and human beings must first become self-aware, present, and less attached to our greed, desires, etc. in order to communicate with each other without projections. But today's world is filled with fear. As long as people are fearful and threatened, they are going to be on the attack mode. And as long as we don't have an agreement on moral principles, most importantly, trust, mutual reciprocity and sincerity, we won't be able to engage in dialogue, except in small pockets.

Haleh Esfandiari ***("Iran will [require huge] reforms in its existing laws, and the government needs to accept the rule of law and transparency. [A]dherence to and implementation of existing [human rights] conventions is the first step… Given the current conditions in a lot of developing countries I am not hopeful [for the future prospects of human rights defence].")***

[I became interested in human rights issues] when I started working as a journalist in Iran almost five decades ago and noticed the lack of respect for freedom of the press, interference by the state through censorship. Newspapers were shut down, and there were cases of journalists being imprisoned. Later on as I started working on women's issues I found out that there was a fundamental problem with women's rights in Iran.

[Thinkers, writers, activists who have inspired me include Hillary Clinton] – I was impressed by her declaration that Women's Rights are Human Rights and Human Rights are Women's Rights. It resonated with a lot of women around the world.

[Regarding recommendations for reforms to better protect citizens against human rights violations], Iran will [require huge] reforms in its existing laws, and the government needs to accept the rule of law and transparency. [A]dherence to and implementation of existing [human rights] conventions is the first step.

Given the current conditions in a lot of developing countries I am not hopeful [for the future prospects of human rights defence].

Scott Lucas ***("I always maintain hope. If I did not have that, I would not be able to maintain the quest… I believe you [would start reforms] with a Bill of Rights in each country. Preferably, this would have a regional or international body, as with the European Court of Human Rights, for oversight. But since this is probably Utopian in many cases, one has to continue to rely on exposing the lack of such a framework or, in countries which claim this but do not uphold it (Iran comes to mind), the lack of fulfilment of those rights.")***

When I was a teenager at the time of Watergate, I wanted to become an investigative journalist. Initially, I was interested in exposing political abuses, but I also developed an interest in abuses of human rights, looking at situations such as the regimes in Central America and the tensions in the Middle East. However, my day-to-day involvement was really spurred by my return to journalism alongside academia before and after the 2003 Iraq War. I was dissatisfied at what could be done as an academic, because of the limits of publication, which could be months or years after I wrote. That led me to pursue publication through electronic media, which in turn fed my involvement with the human rights situation in countries around the world as well as in the US.

Having set up a platform with EA WorldView, the Gaza War of 2008/9 was a catalyst. The Iran protests of June 2009 and what followed were even more significant, as were the developments around the "Arab Spring" from December 2010.

When I was young, I wanted to be a Woodward or a Bernstein. Later, as my interests broadened beyond journalism, I was spurred by philosophers such as John Stuart Mill and John Rawls, the approach of Noam Chomsky, and the work of Edward Said. But now I find that it is writers and activists from the "ground up" who have the most impact on me, as well as journalists in the field such as the late Anthony Shadid. I find hope in a Lina Sergie Attar or Zaina Erhaim from Syria, a Hila Sedighi, Nasrin Sotoudeh, or Bahareh Hedayat from Iran, volunteers like the White Helmets, or all those who work in the camps. I am inspired by a shining exception such as Jo Cox, who defied the political norms to always fight for those who could not represent themselves. I owe so much to [other human rights activists]. I am just fortunate that changes in media technology have made it possible for me to do a bit with writing and publication based on all they do.

I wake every day about 5:30 a.m. to review all my feeds of information – personal contacts, social media links, other journalists. By 8 a.m., I want to have EA WorldView set up with the latest information from Syria and Iran and with at least two analyses and/or features from the Middle East and other areas of the world. Through the day, there is updating of the site as well as academic duties – research, writing, teaching, supervision of postgraduate students. Often, there are media appearances on radio and TV or contribution to newspaper and magazine articles. I never go off the clock – I have a very understanding wife! – in that I am always thinking about what might and should be done.

[Regarding recommendations for reform], I believe you start with a Bill of Rights in each country. Preferably, this would have a regional or international body, as with the European Court of Human Rights, for oversight. But since this is probably Utopian in many cases, one has to continue to rely on exposing the lack of such a framework or, in countries which claim this but do not uphold it (Iran comes to mind), the lack of fulfilment of those rights. I believe that the right to life, shelter, education, health care, food, and

freedom from persecution are universal rights, whatever the local interpretation of social or political systems.

The UN, as it is constituted, is a failure at its highest level. However, at the level of its agencies carrying out work to help those suffering deprivation and abuse – alongside many NGOs pursuing this work, it has a value. Unfortunately, we are still in a system where a few States have preponderant power. I do not believe that an international governing body can overturn this. So we have to work from the ground up to find ways of pursuing the defense of rights and local arrangements to ensure these. Perhaps if these networks and arrangements are established, it can generate some pressure on States to modify their activities, both with respect to their own systems and to their involvement in others.

I always maintain hope. If I did not have that, I would not be able to maintain the quest.

Petr Lom ***("I do hope the world is becoming softer and gentler…and more civilized (go Steven Pinker, go… The International Criminal Court in the Hague [is the best-positioned to defend the victims of arbitrary actions by states], I guess… Of course, I keep making human rights films.")***

Actively, [I became interested in human rights issues] since I started making films in 2003. Earlier, because my family fled the Russian invasion in 1968, and we immigrated to Canada – this is my personal motivation.

[Thinkers, writers, activists who have inspired me most) recently – Can Dundar. Amazing stuff. "We are Arrested" – his new book. Otherwise, it is a long list….

The greatest difficulty [of human rights work]: Consistently making a living. Filmmaking is tough. (whine…) Rewards? You get to make art, make beautiful things and help people. We try to change the world through storytelling. In the belief that inspiration above all – from admirable and beautiful people suffering injustice – can shift centres of gravity somewhere…

All [rights] in the Universal Declaration, and probably the other agreements nations sign – CEDAW, ICCPR [are universal]. I don't buy the relativist argument about human rights. But if you are really pressed, then boil it down to Judith Shklar's argument that everyone wants to live free from cruelty, "the one thing we all know…"

The International Criminal Court in the Hague [is the best-positioned to defend the victims of arbitrary actions by states], I guess… I hope I am not a grumpy old man. Of course, I keep making human rights films. I do hope the world is becoming softer and gentler…and more civilized (go Steven Pinker, go…)

Richard Falk ***("On public order issues and freedom of expression there are clashes that cannot be presently resolved… I do think the UN Human Rights Council is the most effective body focused on human rights. Its budget limits what it can do, but it there was a more genuine interest in detaching human rights from geopolitics, the HRC could become a very effective institution. The HRC is also overly politicized, and could function better if allowed to be more independent… I think formal legislation has limited capability. Education is important, and a political leadership dedicated to upholding human rights... I think the pressures brought on the middle classes in the West as a result of growing economic disparities has weakened support for human***

rights, but it also may indicate the presence of pre-revolutionary conditions that produce progressive challenges to the established order…")

I [became interested in human rights] gradually, basically an outgrowth of my approach to international law and international relations, which emphasized ethical dimensions, and a sense of identification with those suffering abuse as a result of state and market forces.

I was not very influenced by the early American writing on human rights, which tended to view the subject-matter as an issue of foreign policy with no relevance to the domestic realities of the US. I disagreed with this view even in the 1950s.

I suppose my greatest professional difficulty is taking on more than I can handle well, and feeling pressed by unmet deadlines and expectations. I try to find some quiet time for writing in the mornings and late afternoons, but in between due to teaching, meetings, students, letters of recommendations, tennis/squash, and campus life I felt consistently unproductive. The greatest rewards were undoubtedly the feeling that my lectures were okay, that I had finally finished some work that was long overdue, and that my tennis/squash had not fallen below the mediocre standards I set for myself.

Except for my work in the late 1960s and 1970s as an expert witness for various categories of anti-war people resisting the draft, engaged in civil disobedience, seeking to leave the armed forces, I was pretty much a library scholar. I did go on visits to North Vietnam and South Africa in 1968, to the Philippines somewhat later, that had a human rights dimension, especially my role in apartheid South Africa as a trial observer on behalf of the International Commission of Jurists in Pretoria, a prosecution of the leaders of the Namibia independence movement. It was a moving experience, putting me in touch with many leaders of the anti-apartheid moment, including Winnie Mandela. Also, from the mid-1970s I was very active in the formation of the International Peoples Tribunal based in Rome and founded by Lelio Basso. I continued over the years to participate as a member of the jury in many sessions of the IPT, and also was one of the organizers of Iraq War Tribunal in Istanbul in 2005. Then in recent years, 2008-2014, I served as Special Rapporteur for the UN Human Rights Council, focusing on Israeli violations of human rights in Occupied Palestine. On all these issues I have spoken quite frequently in both academic and activist settings.

I think formal legislation has limited capability. Education is important, and a political leadership dedicated to upholding human rights.

I think these terms ['human rights', 'human security', 'social justice'] have the stature to be useful in inter-cultural dialogue; I am not sure that a 'consensus' is either helpful or necessary. I think there are points of agreement, e.g. torture. On public order issues and freedom of expression there are clashes that cannot be presently resolved.

I do think the UN Human Rights Council is the most effective body focused on human rights. Its budget limits what it can do, but it there was a more genuine interest in detaching human rights from geopolitics, the HRC could become a very effective institution. HRC is also overly politicized, and could function better if allowed to be more independent. It is currently criticized from many angles, mostly unfairly. I know from my personal experience that it is the most effective international body that exposes human rights abuses of Israel, and gets lots of flak as a result.

The rise of the popular autocrat is definitely bad news for the human rights community, and this trend is not likely to change soon. Somewhat encouraging are spontaneous efforts around the world to help prisoners of conscience and vulnerable groups.

I think the pressures brought on the middle classes in the West as a result of growing economic disparities has weakened support for human rights, but it also may indicate the presence of pre-revolutionary conditions that produce progressive challenges to the established order. Because of the collapse of socialism after the fall of the Soviet Union, capitalism has not had to worry about any rival economic orientation, and the shift from Keynesian economics to neoliberalism has had a depressant effect on the

protection of economic and social rights, as well as has the weakening of organized labor due to the increasingly digitized economy.

J. Paul Martin ***("[The] real challenge is governments and government officials accepting their responsibility…")***

[I became interested in human rights issues thanks to] educational work in South Africa. [Thinkers, writers, activists who have inspired me most are human rights scholars and others including]: Henkin, Zalaquett, Schachter, Annan, Vieira, Lockwood, Claude, Sannoh, Gongloe. [The] real challenge is governments and government officials accepting their responsibility.